



Col. Arthur D. Simons Center  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

# InterAgency Journal

## **Interagency Cooperation: Quo Vadis?**

*Ted Strickler*

## **Unlocking Interagency Secrets: A New Rosetta Stone?**

*Lino Miani*

## **Rethinking the Geographic Combatant Commands**

*Edward Marks*

## **When Unity of Effort Is Not Enough**

*Terry McNamara*

## **Concepts and Systems for States in Crisis**

*Nicholas H. Riegg*

## **Navigating Interagency Education and Training Courses**

*John A. Dyson*

## **An Integrative Approach to the Interagency Process**

*Leonard Lira*

**The Journal of the Simons Center  
Vol. 1, Issue 1, Fall 2010**

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>2010</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>InterAgency Journal. Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 2010</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Col. Arthur D. Simons Center, 655 Biddle Blvd., PO Box 3429, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 66027</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>64</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## ***InterAgency Journal***

The *InterAgency Journal (IAJ)* is published semiannually by the Command and General Staff College Foundation Press for the Col. Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation. The *InterAgency Journal* is a national security studies journal providing a forum for professional discussion and the exchange of information and ideas on matters pertaining to operational and tactical issues of interagency cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

The articles published in the *IAJ* represent the opinions of the author and do not reflect the official views of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the United States Government, the Simons Center, or the Command and General Staff College Foundation.

**Contributions:** The Simons Center encourages the submission of original articles based on research from primary sources or which stem from lessons learned via personal experiences. For additional information see “Simons Center Writers Submission Guidelines” on the Simons Center website at [www.TheSimonsCenter.org/publications](http://www.TheSimonsCenter.org/publications).

Publications released by the Simons Center are not copyrighted, however the Simons Center requests acknowledgment in the use of its materials in other works.



### ***About the Simons Center***

The Col. Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation is a major component of the Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc. The Center’s mission is to foster and develop an interagency body of knowledge to enhance education at the U.S. Army CGSC while facilitating broader and more effective cooperation within the U.S. government at the operational and tactical levels through study, research, analysis, publication and outreach.



### ***About the CGSC Foundation***

The Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc., was established on December 28, 2005 as a tax-exempt, non-profit educational foundation that provides resources and support to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in the development of tomorrow’s military leaders. The CGSC Foundation helps to advance the profession of military art and science by promoting the welfare and enhancing the prestigious educational programs of the CGSC. The CGSC Foundation supports the College’s many areas of focus by providing financial and research support for major programs such as the Simons Center, symposia, conferences, and lectures, as well as funding and organizing community outreach activities that help connect the American public to their Army. All Simons Center works are published by the “CGSC Foundation Press.”

# InterAgency Journal

**Vol. 1, Issue 1, Fall 2010**

**Col. Arthur D. Simons Center**  
*for the Study of Interagency Cooperation*

655 Biddle Blvd.  
PO Box 3429  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027  
Ph: 913-682-7244  
Fax: 913-682-7247  
Email: office@TheSimonsCenter.org  
Web site: www.TheSimonsCenter.org

## **PUBLISHER**

**Robert R. Ulin**

## **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**Theodore E. Strickler**

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

**Raymond D. Barrett, Jr.**

## **RESEARCH DIRECTOR**

**Nicholas Reigg**

## **COPY EDITOR**

**Valerie Tystad**

## **DESIGN/PRODUCTION**

**Mark H. Wiggins**  
MHW Public Relations

## **PRINTING**

**Advantage Printing**  
Leavenworth, Kansas

# FEATURES

- 3 Interagency Cooperation: Quo Vadis?**  
by Ted Strickler
- 10 Unlocking Interagency Secrets:  
A New Rosetta Stone?**  
by Lino Miani
- 19 Rethinking the Geographic  
Combatant Commands**  
by Edward Marks
- 24 When Unity of Effort Is Not Enough**  
by Terry McNamara
- 33 Concepts and Systems for States in Crisis**  
by Nicholas H. Reigg
- 41 Navigating Interagency Education  
and Training Courses**  
by John A. Dyson
- 46 An Integrative Approach  
to the Interagency Process**  
by Leonard Lira

# WORTH NOTING

- 56 The Interagency National Security  
Professional Education, Administration, and  
Development (INSPEAD) System Act of 2010**
- 57 Reading List for U.S. Army Generals**
- 58 There is a Reason They Call it Foggy Bottom**



## Interagency Cooperation:

# *Quo Vadis?*

**by Ted Strickler**

**T**he Command and General Staff College Foundation at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, established the Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation in April 2010 with the help of generous financial support from Ross Perot. Mr. Perot elected to name the center after Colonel Arthur “Bull” Simons who led the 1970 Son Tay raid to free prisoners of war in Viet Nam. Colonel Simons (after his retirement from the Army) also organized and led the mission in 1979 to rescue two of Mr. Perot’s employees from a prison in Teheran.

The Simons Center’s charter mandates it to investigate, inform, and influence the full range of issues encountered throughout the process of interagency cooperation. The Center’s mission is to foster and develop a body of knowledge that will enhance the education of military and civilian students at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, as well as to contribute materially to improving the practice of interagency coordination. While recognizing the importance of national strategic policy and the necessity for interagency coordination in arriving at strategic, policy-level decisions, the Center will leave that process for others to investigate and study. We, instead, will concentrate on the conditions and factors that influence the coordination process at the practical, operational, and tactical levels of day-to-day implementation.

This first issue of the Simons Center *InterAgency Journal (IAJ)* introduces a number of themes and topics that contributors will continue to research and review in the months and years ahead. One such theme is the elusive nature of the subject itself. The practice of interagency cooperation is constantly evolving and adapting to new requirements. Methods and procedures that were seen as effective a year or two ago are less so today. For instance, most combatant commands established Joint Interagency Coordinating Groups (JIACGs) in one form or another after 9/11 with the endorsement of then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the approval, in concept, by the National Security Council Deputies Committee. These were seen initially by the Joint Staff at the Pentagon as one innovative

**Ted Strickler is the Executive Director of the Col. Arthur D. Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation. He is a former Senior Foreign Service Officer (Minister-Counselor) with the Department of State.**

**The word “interagency” is clearly identified in the dictionary as an adjective, not a noun.**

solution to optimizing interagency coordination. Although the JIACG model morphed into different configurations at various military commands, the JIACG experiment remained only an improvement on the organizational margins and is now regarded by some as cumbersome and outdated. But merely chronicling the history of how interagency coordination has been carried out tells only a part of the story. It does not adequately explain why certain coordination methods and techniques were effective while others were not. The historical approach also tends to color the interagency coordination process with the overall outcome of the specific program or activity. This halo effect may obscure the fact that some operations achieved a positive outcome despite poor interagency cooperation and vice versa.

An academic pursuit of the subject of interagency cooperation equally grounded in practice as well as theory is hindered, however, by constraints of the English language itself. First is the confusion over the term “interagency”. The word “interagency” is clearly identified in the dictionary as an adjective, not a noun. Yet, increasingly, many use it as a noun in daily discourse. The problem is not with the word, but with the language which lacks a sufficiently robust vocabulary to describe fully the many actors, activities and actions involved in the process of interagency cooperation. In some cases, such as characterizing the variety and diversity of the color blue, English provides a rich selection of options (sapphire, aquamarine, teal, etc.). But when it comes to describing the intricacies of interagency activities of a cooperative nature, we have barely a handful. It, therefore, is not

surprising that the description of the players or the process of interagency cooperation, which is often not clearly evident, is frequently misrepresented. Some have attempted to overcome this linguistic limitation with the use of the term “Whole of Government” to describe what is intended by a concerted and coordinated interagency effort to apply all elements of governmental power. For the present, however, “interagency” remains the term of choice for most observers, commentators and practitioners of the process.

Second, the dearth of descriptive terminology is only one limitation of the language. The other constraining factor is the manner in which existing language unconsciously colors our thinking and hinders comprehension of the interagency process. The most frequently used words to describe interagency activity are cooperation (to operate together), coordination (to set in order) and collaboration (to labor together). Each “co” prefix implies a two-dimensional aspect to the activity as found in the terms copilot or Cartesian coordinate. The former describes a second pilot, the latter the two values required to locate a point on an X and a Y axis. Cooperation, coordination and collaboration are all words with two-dimensional histories being applied to complex, multidimensional activities. Such conjoined terminology subconsciously limits our grasp of the subject and restricts our insight into the intricacies of the world of interagency operations. To overcome this shortcoming, we need a more nuanced lexicon of interagency terminology that captures its multidimensional nature and allows commentators and practitioners to more adequately describe, analyze, and evaluate the interagency process. If we cannot fully define and describe the breadth and depth of interagency cooperation, we will never fully understand or master it.

An additional aspect of interagency coordination that complicates investigation and study is its multifaceted nature. Differing organizational structures, legal authorities, duties, responsibilities, and resource levels all play a role

in how agencies interact with each other. When roles, authorities, and resources are clearly defined and in alignment, there are fewer impediments to cooperation. When they are unclear, overlap, or diverge, cooperation may become more difficult or less effective. For example, the Department of State (State) is resourced with only about 6,000 Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and a budget of approximately 5 percent of the Department of Defense (DoD) budget. In any situation requiring coordination with the Department of Defense, the State Department often struggles to field a corresponding level of resources to engage with DoD's 100,000-plus military officers and its budget of nearly \$700 billion. This disparity in resources limits State's ability to participate in DoD planning events, exercises, and conferences because of the limited number of available FSOs. One agreement to detail approximately 50 personnel between the two agencies, known as the State/Defense Exchange Program, limped along for years with DoD providing its full quota of officers despite State's inability to fully reciprocate. Even in terms of organizational structure, the areas of responsibility for the military's geographic combatant commands do not align with the boundaries of the State Department's geographic bureaus. Such geographic misalignment does not totally thwart coordination between the two departments, but it does not make it any easier.

Looking at interagency cooperation as a subject of academic inquiry has been primarily the domain of students at the various military war colleges. Student papers have covered the gamut of topics from overcoming interagency cultural differences to first-person accounts of interagency cooperation in combat zones. The effort by the National Defense University to develop a formal curriculum to educate and train government personnel as National Security Professionals with an emphasis on how to work in an interagency environment is notable for its ground breaking endeavor. By comparison, the civilian academic community largely has ignored

the subject, especially with regard to international operations. There are a few exceptions. George Mason University's School of Public Policy offers a program on peacekeeping and stability operations, and some universities are working to establish degree-granting programs in Homeland Security, but these programs are still rare. Recent legislation, (HR 6249) introduced by Representatives Ike Skelton (D-MO) and Geoff Davis (R-KY), to create a system to educate, train, and develop interagency national security professionals across the government may create additional interest in the subject at the nation's colleges and universities.

However, when dealt with at all, most college and university programs at the present still approach the subject of coordinated government activity from an historical or policy perspective. This approach helps to explain government actions from a theoretical policy perspective and in such conceptual terms as balance of power, containment, and the Domino Theory. It does little, however, to advance the understanding of how government agencies actually interact in practical terms to implement policy decisions, especially at the application level outside Washington, D.C. From a coordination viewpoint, instruction that highlights how the State Department, for example is organized with six geographic and over a dozen functional bureaus, has two deputy secretaries, six under secretaries, at least 30 assistant secretaries, nearly 100 deputy assistant secretaries, and approximately two dozen special envoys/representatives/advisors with their various duties and responsibilities (some of which appear to overlap) is probably more critical to the success of current interagency operations than tracing the evolution of American foreign policy from the Monroe Doctrine.

In addition to moving beyond the historical examination of interagency issues using an expanded descriptive vocabulary, there is the need for a more structured, methodical approach to the investigation, study, and analysis of interagency



**...there is the need for a more structured, methodical approach to the investigation, study, and analysis of interagency cooperation...**

cooperation. To date, the characterization of interagency cooperation has been largely subjective and selective. For example, mainstream media's largely uncritical and favorable description of the relationship between Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus in Iraq may have minimized the operational difficulties and friction between military and civilian officials at lower levels. Describing such interagency encounters as excellent, fair, or poor may satisfy the need to affix a descriptive label, but it does little to help fully analyze, understand, and compare agency coordination efforts.

What is needed is a framework or model of the process that describes its component parts and the level of sophistication or expertise at which each individual element functions. For instance, one such element, widely recognized as a key component required for successful interagency coordination, is personal relationships. These relationships could be described in terms of depth from basic to advanced, with basic being defined as an initial exchange of business cards to advanced being characterized by regular (weekly/monthly) face-to-face meetings

Other components of the interagency coordination process eligible for consideration in such a model could be information exchange, goals, attitudes, and procedures. Information exchange or information sharing is a fundamental building block of cooperative efforts. Information sharing, for example, at a basic level has little structure, is less than comprehensive, and is usually episodic in nature. This is characterized by information usually being pulled (requested on a case-by-case basis) and not being pushed (volunteered on a regular basis). Organizations

interacting in this manner usually do so independently and at an arm's distance.

By contrast, a much more advanced level of information sharing emphasizes providing information about future events, intent, and plans as a way of synchronizing multiple efforts to achieve a common goal. This type of information sharing is characterized by open, frequent, two-way communications and is intended to provide more than mere situational awareness of what each participant is currently doing. Such information flow is also more structured and formalized, which may increase the willingness of other partners to rely on the information received as well as to share information in a similar manner and to a like extent.

Conceivably, these and other elements could be assembled in something called an Interagency Coordination Maturity matrix, with the individual elements arrayed across the top, and the various levels from basic to advanced aligned vertically in a manner illustrated in the table on page seven. The individual elements and the various levels of sophistication or complexity all remain open to further discussion and refinement. Such a model would, however, allow for a more uniform, structured, and refined approach to the description and analysis of agency interaction and attempts at coordination. For example, an instance of interagency cooperation could be characterized as being advanced on the level of personal relationships, but only at the intermediate level for information sharing.

The suggested description of each level of interagency engagement (Basic/Consultation, Elementary/Cooperation, Intermediate/Coordination, Advanced/Collaboration) is purely illustrative but is provided in recognition of the fact that it would be useful to have agreed terms of reference related to the description and discussion of interagency cooperation. If the analysis of interagency cooperation were to become more systemic, then strong, relevant terms of reference surely would emerge along the lines illustrated in the following table.

Interagency Maturity Levels	Basic Elements Contributing to Overall IA Maturity Level				
	Interagency Relationships	Information Access	Agency Goals	Agency Attitude	Interagency Process
<b>Basic</b> (Consultation)	Minimal	Restricted: Briefings confined to specific actions underway	Independent; frequently conflict	Self-absorbed	Sporadic
<b>Elementary</b> (Cooperation)	Personal	Limited: Information exchanged to deconflict operations, to stay out of each other's way	Independent but aware of others	Friends could be helpful	Unstructured
<b>Intermediate</b> (Coordination)	Organizational	Expanded: Willing to share future plans to garner mutual support	Independent but aligned with others	Friends are essential	Organized
<b>Advanced</b> (Collaboration)	Institutional	Extensive: Information flow supports full planning cycle and integrated operations	Mutual and reinforcing	Cannot do it alone	Systematic

The need for improved interagency cooperation has been a hot topic of discussion for nearly a decade. Whatever terminology is ultimately adopted to aid the analysis of the process, the essential ingredients for successful interagency coordination are widely recognized and well understood. Most people see the fundamental requirements for effective interagency cooperation as including the following categories.

**Personal Relationships.** These are the foundation of interagency cooperation. The process has to start somewhere, and it usually begins with establishing a personal relationship. But given the frequent changes of government personnel, especially in the military and civilian agencies such as the State Department, such

personal relationships are difficult to sustain and maintain over time. This, unfortunately, undermines the creation and sustainment of trust (a measure of the honesty, integrity and reliability of the relationship) which is the fundamental element that makes a strong personal relationship such a powerful asset in any interagency activity.

**Information sharing.** This is essential. But information sharing frequently masquerades as coordination, providing the illusion of coordination without the substance. In addition, information sharing is often characterized by rigid agency protocols that require information to flow to the top of individual agency stovepipes to be shared at senior levels and then reversing the process to disseminate the information downward through each agency's separate channel to get

**...information sharing  
frequently masquerades  
as coordination, providing  
the illusion of coordination  
without the substance...**

the information to where it is needed at the operational and tactical levels.

**Planning.** Coordinated interagency efforts require coordinated interagency planning. But civilian agency resources devoted to detailed planning are far fewer and less well developed than those of the military. This disparity often hands the military the planning responsibility by default. The military planning system, JOPES, (Joint Operational Planning and Execution System) is not without its problems in terms of planning for interagency operations. JOPES doctrine requires that all interagency aspects of a plan be captured and discussed in a separate part of the plan, Annex V. This artificially limits the discussion of interagency elements of the plan to a single annex rather than having those essential interagency activities discussed in each relevant section of the plan.

**Exercises.** Most people will acknowledge that a team which does not practice together will never win the championship. Yet when it comes to complex operations requiring multiple agency involvement, the extent and nature of the practice sessions are often very limited. And when exercises are conducted, the key civilian players are frequently surrogate, stand-ins for the real officials. Football teams would never practice without the quarterback, but it happens all the time in government exercises.

If the basic components of interagency cooperation and the essential practices necessary for their successful operation are so well understood, why is interagency cooperation so difficult to achieve? Numerous fundamental

impediments are well known, ranging from different corporate cultures, to restricted legal authorities, to divergent missions and goals. If the problem is self-evident, why is the solution so difficult? Isaac Newton discovered the answer more than 300 years ago when he postulated his First Law of Motion:

*An object at rest tends to remain at rest and an object in motion tends to remain in motion with the same speed on the same path or trajectory unless acted upon by an external force.*

Inertia or resistance to change is undoubtedly the biggest obstacle to improving interagency cooperation. Human behavior by its very nature clings to the status quo. Despite the recognition by the military services of the need for increased "jointness" in their command structure, organizational staffing, and operating capability, it took a failed rescue attempt of American hostages in Iran in 1979 to force action. Then, even with the recognition that something needed to be done, it required an additional five years for Congress to enact the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1984 which finally mandated the needed changes. There has been much speculation about the need for a similar Congressional Act to force greater integration and coordination of civilian agencies' activities. Because resistance to new ways of thinking and operating is so pervasive, change of this magnitude will not be easy or forthcoming in the near future, leaving the practitioners of interagency cooperation to deal with the situation as it is, not as it should be.

While continuing to press for a more ideal solution, we should not allow "The Perfect" to become the enemy of "The Good." As evidenced by several accounts elsewhere in this journal, improvements in the interagency coordination process have been and continue to be made, especially by those working below the strategic level outside the Washington, D.C. Beltway. The mission of the Simons Center is to publicize

those activities, innovations, and contributions that aid interagency coordination efforts now and point the way for continued improvements in the future.

Our intent for the *InterAgency Journal* is to give voice to those who demonstrate how agencies can, in fact, work better together. We intend to continue to champion the cause of improving interagency cooperation at the operational and tactical levels because that effort is so vital in achieving a more synchronized, whole-of-government response to domestic and international events.

Our goal for the *InterAgency Journal* is to further the discussion and understanding of how to replace current ad hoc interagency coordination efforts with more permanent and institutionalized arrangements that have a demonstrated track record of success. The quest for improved, streamlined, and better coordinated interagency teamwork is a vital national effort. You can help support this important cause with your ideas, comments and contributions.

We look forward to hearing from you and being able to share your experiences, insights and recommendations with the growing community of knowledgeable professionals who practice, study, or teach the art of interagency cooperation. **IAJ**

**Our goal for the *InterAgency Journal* is to further the discussion and understanding of how to replace current ad hoc interagency coordination efforts with more permanent and institutionalized arrangements that have a demonstrated track record of success.**

## Unlocking Interagency Secrets:

# *A New Rosetta Stone?*

**by Lino Miani**

As the terrorist attacks against the United States unfolded on September 11, 2001, it became very apparent to decision makers at all levels of state and federal government that they were unable to coordinate an effective response across agency lines. As the dust settled over New York and Washington, the country realized that the terrorists had discovered and exploited a seam in our security system. This seam is a side effect of our divided government and our desire to separate our internal security mechanisms from our external ones.

Illustrating this, the 9/11 Commission Report is replete with poignant details of communication failures, bureaucratic infighting, and seemingly inexcusable lapses in teamwork among the myriad agencies of the U.S. government that had some hand in tracking Al Qaeda. There was a natural feeling of outrage at these shortcomings. Although most careful observers of the security sector did not need the 9/11 Commission Report to tell them that globalized threats require coordinated interagency responses, the initial flurry of bureaucratic fixes in the years following 9/11 showed them that making interagency processes work is more complex than simply taking action to plug the gaps. The very structure and culture of executive branch agencies often prevent them from cooperating fully, and the effects of direct Congressional advocacy and oversight make accountability and authority flow in unpredictable directions.

Despite our fear and outrage, there are deep-seated reasons why we do not want too much interagency cooperation in the security sector. The prospect of developing a monolithic security apparatus, centrally controlled by a single office or entity, violates our national tradition of separate government authorities. Our collective wariness of developing an insidious American-style *Gestapo* prevents us from going too far in building a security regime that can operate flexibly and quickly across sectors of the government and economy at the local, state, and federal levels to prevent or react to terrorist threats.

**Major Lino Miani is a U.S. Army Special Forces officer with operational experience in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas Interagency Studies Program, and was an Olmsted Foundation Scholar in Strategic and Defense Studies at the University of Malaysia.**

This leaves questions about how to balance, in a way that works for us, the effectiveness of our security sector with our cultural distrust of government. Some believe that it is time for legislation in the tradition of the Goldwater-Nichols Act that effectively forced the military services to develop joint operating capabilities. Others consider a statutory solution to our interagency woes to be a distant hope at best. They prefer to work creatively within the existing system and devise organizational solutions like joint-interagency task forces and national coordination centers, or informal approaches such as interagency exchange or education programs. An example of the latter would be the Interagency Studies Program (ISP) for special operations and intelligence officers at the University of Kansas.

Whatever solution emerges in the coming years, it is clear that there is no Rosetta Stone that will help us unlock the secrets of the interagency. To make it work properly will require a cultural and inter-departmental fluency that is quite rare in today's federal workforce. The security sector will be particularly difficult to reform because it requires its officers to carefully cultivate technical skills over an entire career. Until our leaders at the political levels of government settle on a way to organize effort and manage resources more flexibly and effectively, we will be forced to rely on informal and ad hoc solutions.

### **Why we want interagency cooperation in the security sector**

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States were the culmination of an enemy special operation that was global in scope, years in duration, and almost perfect in its security. The intelligence services of the United States and several of its allies and partners detected only the smallest hints of the operation that was taking place. A meeting of suspected terrorists in Kuala Lumpur; odd behavior by Arab students at flight schools in the United States; others with expired student visas; and a failed

bomb plot in the Philippines—all were significant events of themselves, but investigations into those incidents revealed virtually none of the connections that would have brought the larger picture into focus. Frustratingly, shared insight into any one of those events could have led to the disruption of Al Qaeda's plot but for the tangled web of bureaucratic restrictions and self-imposed boundaries that hindered cooperation between the U.S. agencies involved.

Prior to the end of the Cold War in 1991, security seemed much simpler. States recognized security threats as the hostile activities of a rival state and its organs. For every Soviet agency that threatened America, there was an equal and opposite U.S. agency to address it. In that environment, the division of U.S. government effort was easily clarified along organizational lines. Information could be compartmentalized for security, budgets earmarked, and jurisdictions rigidly defined.

Today however, the concept of security is expanding too quickly for governments to address effectively. Threats come from multiple sources, affect disparate segments of society, and cross national boundaries. There is no single agency that can deal with events like September 11, which saw attacks by stateless terrorists on our financial, transportation, and military systems. Transnational threats like these take many forms, from mass migration away from environmental disasters, to over-fishing, to stateless terrorists that shelter in one state, plan in a second, and act in a third.

Observers of the U.S. government know that the quest for interagency efficacy is not a new one. It therefore seems strange that we have suddenly discovered a need for interagency cooperation six decades after passage of the National Security Act sought to address many similar problems. Yet there are significant differences between our situations then and now. The proliferation of security concerns that took place after 1991 created a link that did not previously exist between security and



a host of social factors. For example, there is now, arguably, a correlation between social ills like poverty and ethnic inequality, and terrorism and war. Many political theorists believe that a country's economic development contributes to its stability and that without development, stability will be short-lived.

### **Why interagency processes are difficult**

The modern threat environment presents multi-sector challenges that confound Cold War era solutions. The American system of government features two quite separate dimensions of interagency process, the first of which is a vertical differentiation that stems from the division between levels of government. The strength and independence of state and local governments in the United States are unique in the world. The limited federal role in law enforcement, and a relatively light federal tax burden, allows governments at the lower levels to do a credible job managing their own affairs

be interagency differences of opinion on what constitutes each community's security interests and how they should be pursued.

Many state and local officials see federal intrusion into their affairs as a threat to their autonomy, or even their presumed "sovereignty." They believe the distant and distracted federal government cannot manage local affairs as well as local officials can. Others complain they receive less attention from Washington than they deserve. They are forced to take expensive measures to protect their interests from transnational threats they are powerless to affect and sometimes prohibited from addressing. Whether they fear federal involvement or want more of it, officials at state and local levels tend to agree that transnational threats, if not Washington's fault, are certainly Washington's responsibility. This leaves the states and towns believing they are bullied and unprotected, and federal officials feeling ineffective and underappreciated.

The second dimension of interagency process characteristic of the U.S. governmental system is a horizontal differentiation that is intra-federal—the relationships among federal government agencies. This is what most people think of when they use the term "interagency", but the processes that determine how agencies of the executive branch of the federal government cooperate are also affected by legislative, and to a lesser extent, judicial decisions. Within this "horizontal" dimension there are structural and cultural barriers to cooperation that bear on the problem as well. The "mission sets," budgets, geographic jurisdictions, and personnel, command and control, and information systems of these agencies are compartmented from one another. This compartmented structure, a relic of the Cold War, had a number of security advantages but it is not good for healthy interagency cooperation.

At working levels, these structural barriers are overcome by cooperative arrangements between agency representatives operating under the leadership of a single "sponsor". The

**...yet with over 87,000 state and local jurisdictions in the United States, it is inevitable that there will be interagency differences of opinion...**

by passing laws, levying taxes, and maintaining order. This independence is a double-edged sword in today's threat environment. With the growing inability of national governments to shelter their populations from the negative effects of events beyond their borders—not all of which are hostile acts—state and local governments are ill prepared to take up the slack. This generates a need for a federal role in local preparedness and consequence-management programs; yet with over 87,000 state and local jurisdictions in the United States, it is inevitable that there will

classic example of this are the U.S. country teams at American embassies worldwide. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Iraq and Afghanistan provide a similar example but with military sponsorship. In the embassy model, the sponsor is the Department of State which operates the embassy itself and wields a measure of authority over the activities of the interagency offices there. A cost-sharing scheme unifies budgets that fund common functions of the embassy, and control, or more precisely, coordination, is accomplished primarily by weekly country team meetings chaired by the Chief of Mission, but also through myriad informal contacts among key embassy officers.

Although country teams and PRTs are useful and generally successful examples of interagency coordination, there are still structural barriers to effective cooperation. The main weakness of interagency constructs like these is that the leaders of these organizations do not wield complete hierarchical authority over the activities of those under their jurisdiction. In the case of the country team, agency representatives that fall under Chief of Mission authority still take their instructions, draw their budgets, and owe their career advancement to their home agencies in Washington or elsewhere. This multiplies the number of stakeholders involved and builds interagency conflict into the functioning of any country team, PRT, or similar organization.

At a higher level, these challenges are met in a similar fashion but generally take the form of specialized organizations that have an issue-based or geographic orientation. The emergence of Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATF), or issue-based “centers” like the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), is driven by the need to facilitate interagency cooperation at a pan-organizational level. JIATFs, typically under Department of Defense sponsorship, are operational units that can generate action on the ground, whereas centers have a more diverse leadership and are usually limited to analysis and policy direction.

The geographic or issue-based orientation of these units gives them access to flexible funding dedicated to address the particular interest for which they were created. For example, JIATF-West, originally created to support U.S. counterdrug activities in Asia, is partially funded by money set aside by member agencies for that purpose. JIATF-West is able to use this money for both military and paramilitary activities that can cover a spectrum of operations ranging from

**The emergence of Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATF), or issue-based “centers” like the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), is driven by the need to facilitate interagency cooperation at a pan-organizational level.**

capacity building to direct action. Furthermore, because JIATF-West employs forces in a discrete, mission-by-mission manner, it can exercise direct authority over the forces assigned to it for short duration tasks. Nonetheless, despite the budgetary flexibility and direct control of assets wielded by organizations like JIATF-West, these units still suffer from many of the same structural obstacles as country teams and PRTs at a lower level.

Even if we managed to iron out all the structural bugs in the interagency process, there are cultural barriers to effective cooperation that are more subtle but perhaps more powerful inhibitors. There are two types of agencies within the national security sector of the executive branch: those that are process-oriented and those that are objective-oriented. The work of process-oriented organizations, like the State Department, can never truly end. There is no perfect solution in the world of diplomacy and



therefore, no point engaging in detailed planning to achieve one. Experience is the only effective training program; everything else is a distraction. These organizations do not limit themselves to a single way of doing business, nor are they averse to accepting less-than optimal outcomes because they know that no issue is ever completely settled.<sup>1</sup>

This point of view is very difficult for objective-oriented agencies like the military to understand. Their operations are divided into discrete events that have identifiable start and

wrongdoing, law enforcement agencies gauge their success according to their ability to apprehend offenders and build a case against them that will lead to prosecution in a court of law. Military and intelligence agencies on the other hand, are generally satisfied to neutralize threats posed by targeted individuals or entities; prosecution is not important. They prefer to act preemptively (when authorized) and only care to gather the information necessary to achieve a well-defined operation against that target. The differing priorities between law enforcement and other agencies are particularly troublesome when attempting to counter terrorism which straddles the line between criminality and warfare.

In the American system of government, legislative and judicial impositions on what would otherwise be a purely executive function can further complicate interagency cooperation. In the security sector, no less than in other areas, Congress' constitutional authority over the budget gives it a wide-ranging and powerful impact on the scope and nature of executive activity. Through the use of budgetary earmarks, the ability to mandate specific tasks for the government, and a responsibility to conduct oversight of government activities, Congress can shape what executive agencies do and how they do it. The Congressional agenda often differs from that of the President or of the agencies themselves, and can alternately require action that the bureaucracies do not want to take, or constrain them in ways that they do not wish to be constrained.

The complexity and variety of Congressional aims further crowds the field of stakeholders in the interagency realm to which judicial review adds yet another layer. The Supreme Court, and by extension, the entire federal court system, has a powerful, if sometimes ill-defined authority to shape executive branch operations through judicial review.<sup>2</sup> Judicial review allows individual members of Congress, the public, or other executive branch agencies, to challenge federal programs or even specific aspects of those

**Today's threat environment increasingly favors a process-oriented approach to which objective-oriented agencies like the military struggle to adapt.**

end points. Within given parameters, objective-oriented agencies can usually determine an optimal outcome and will conduct detailed planning to achieve it. This requires an adherence to standard operating procedures and a rigid division of labor that allows their specially trained personnel to identify themselves according to their function in the organization. These cultural traits come to the fore whenever these two types of organizations cooperate to solve a common problem. Today's threat environment increasingly favors a process-oriented approach to which objective-oriented agencies like the military struggle to adapt.

There are also cultural divisions between those agencies that deal with internal security issues and those that deal with external ones. In a broad sense, the former are law enforcement agencies, and the latter are either military or intelligence agencies, or the Department of State. Law enforcement agencies take a reactive approach to their security responsibilities. Designed primarily to punish criminal

programs through lawsuits. For this reason, federal agencies are sometimes wary of taking any action, no matter how effective or legitimate, if they know it can be challenged forcefully in court.

Although international cooperation in security matters represents a third dimension of interagency relationships affecting the U.S. government, this paper will not discuss it. Suffice it to say that many of the obstacles that hinder interagency cooperation within our own government, are present, and often multiplied, when we deal with a foreign government or governments.

### **Why we are skeptical of interagency cooperation**

American political tradition makes it simply unacceptable to entrust our internal security to a single organization. Interagency options are more acceptable precisely because they are perceived as less threatening to civil liberties than more monolithic structures. This deep cultural and philosophical undercurrent is not subject to the whims of a presidential administration or those of a congressional session. While we cannot ignore the impact of the President and Congress, or the utility of their administrative impulses, if we are to understand our difficulties with interagency processes, we must first recognize the connections between those built-in barriers, American culture and history, and the limitations imposed upon our actions by the domestic and international systems of which our country is a part.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution were very careful to limit the powers of the executive branch of the government and to safeguard the rights of the nation's citizens. Though based in liberal philosophy, this was a cultural imperative in the thirteen newly independent colonies. These colonies, like their citizens, saw themselves as independent entities, self-governing, and at home with the democratic process that is so useful for self-made men. This history is reflected, not just

in the divided power structures of the federal government, but also in the strong political identities of individual communities and the division of labor among local, state, and federal institutions.

Until the end of the bipolar system of the Cold War, the separation of internal and external security mechanisms ameliorated American concerns about a standing military.

**"Whole of government" has become a watchword in Washington but the new approach is not universally accepted or evenly implemented.**

The arrangement, which featured a hierarchical external security system and a divided internal system, was a good one. Subordination of the Defense Department to civilian leadership and prohibiting it from interfering in domestic affairs assuaged fears of federal power. Americans grew accustomed to the benefits of having a powerful standing army with an effective command structure and a strategic doctrine dominated by airpower and nuclear deterrence. The military was designed for quick, decisive victory without the bloody cost of large-scale ground combat. But the expanding post-Cold War definition of security began to blur the lines between internal and external threats. Those threats no longer emanated exclusively from states and it was suddenly impossible to find purely military solutions to any of the nation's security problems. In the post-Cold War world, danger came from intrastate conflict, communal warfare, disease, transnational crime, uncontrolled migration, and of course, terrorism.

The September 11th attacks forced America to fundamentally change its security paradigm. Once the exclusive domain of the military,

warfare today appears to have as much to do with development as it does with direct action. “Whole of government” has become a watchword in Washington but the new approach is not universally accepted or evenly implemented. Networked, interagency solutions are inefficient and difficult to understand, but the more drastic step of consolidating paramilitary powers into a single agency responsible for internal security is simply not acceptable. The organizational task

**The dilemma for the U.S. government is how to reconcile an increasingly urgent need for effective defenses against new and varied unconventional threats with an American culture that is still very liberal (in the classical sense) in orientation.**

remains a difficult one. An interagency security apparatus is anathema to the part of U.S. culture that demands decisive action, yet a monolith with centralized police powers is unacceptable to the American sense of individual freedom. Any move towards a centralized internal security apparatus will be resisted from below and hamstrung by legislative protections. The dilemma for the U.S. government is how to reconcile an increasingly urgent need for effective defenses against new and varied unconventional threats with an American culture that is still very liberal (in the classical sense) in orientation. Earmarked budgets, cumbersome reporting requirements, and operational restrictions are all manifestations of the American cultural discomfort with the idea of an integrated security apparatus. So is the constant intervention of a Congress concerned about civil liberties.

For all these reasons, unification of the government’s security sector under a monolithic

control structure is not just implausible, it might actually cause unintended negative effects. Network governance structures like the NCTC are an effective way to deal with complex security issues such as transnational terrorism. By draining the administrative moats between organizations, network governance eliminates many of the bureaucratic boundaries that inhibit cooperation. However, the cross pollination of budgets, personnel, and most importantly information, that issue-based governance requires, will also reduce compartments or “stovepipes” carefully constructed to preserve each agency’s identity and protect each from any security breaches in another. Resolution of this dilemma goes beyond technical solutions and will demand a systemic social solution available only to the most skilled interagency-minded individuals.

**How do we get interagency cooperation that is right for us?**

The culture and structure of the U.S. government limits the range of possible interagency solutions for our systemic problem to a small number of technical fixes. There is general recognition among practitioners that the status quo, at least in the security sector, depends upon personal relationships built between individual officers within ad hoc structures like PRTs or in issue-based organizations like JIATF-West and the NCTC. Initially, these officers tend to be only marginally effective because they spend a great deal of time learning how to work effectively with their interagency brethren. By the time they fully understand the capabilities of their interagency counterparts, it is time for them to move on to other assignments. In many cases they return to home agencies that do not understand or value the contributions they made in their previous assignments. This deters many of the best officers from seeking jobs outside their home agencies and further institutionalizes cross-cultural barriers within the government.

Overcoming these factors would require a significant overhaul of how we do business.

Among other things, officers would need to have common backgrounds in training and operating principles, a common lingo, compatible planning processes, and a supportive personnel system. Some believe this would require a comprehensive legislative solution. They lament the inability of the government to achieve unity of interagency effort outside times of crisis, and they invoke the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 as an example to be emulated and applied to the entire government. The Goldwater-Nichols Act, intended among other things, to “provide for more efficient use of defense resources” and “enhance the effectiveness of military operations,”<sup>3</sup> was designed to put an end to wasteful bureaucratic infighting among the military services. The Act was a response to a string of embarrassing failures attributable to a lack of service interoperability that culminated in military disasters in Iran and elsewhere. After nearly a quarter century, the Act has come close to creating an effective joint culture within the military, but there is no serious discussion of a similar statutory remedy for the rest of the government, nor is there any agreement on how best to address such an enormous undertaking. As noted earlier, generating structural and cultural change of this magnitude is nearly impossible and may even be counterproductive.

Yet there is another option, a hybrid solution that envisions developing a corps of officers with a deep interagency skill-set gained through exchange of personnel and interagency-specific education programs that equip participants with the tools necessary for success in a multi-sector environment. By providing these conceptual tools upfront, programs—such as the Masters in Interagency Studies Program (ISP) at the University of Kansas—would have the principle benefit of reducing the time an officer spends learning the nuances of interagency communication. The ISP was carefully tailored to give the students a broad and sophisticated understanding of concepts that will contribute to their success in the future. The program

encompassed classes in public administration, international law, philosophy of international relations, negotiations, American political institutions, the American culture of war, the study of terrorism, and a seminar on the practical aspects of interagency policy and implementation taught by a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State. The latter seminar featured lengthy private discussions with policy makers at senior levels of interagency responsibility including the Deputy White House Chief of Staff, the State Department’s Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), a senior Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) case officer, and veterans of the Vietnam-era Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program (CORDS), an interagency success story in its own right.

Graduates of the ISP are well prepared to

**After nearly a quarter century, the [Goldwater-Nichols] Act has come close to creating an effective joint culture within the military, but there is no serious discussion of a similar statutory remedy for the rest of the government...**

serve in critical assignments within the security sector that feature particularly complex problems of interagency interoperability. The inaugural class, which graduated in July 2010, included 16 mid-level officers from diverse backgrounds within the special operations and intelligence communities. Carefully selected for their maturity, potential for promotion and their previous interagency experience, the students seized the opportunity to learn from one another, the faculty, and other Kansas University students, and to build lasting relationships with one another

that will continue to be the cornerstone of a healthy interagency process. By creating a small cadre of interagency experts, the ISP will contribute, over time, to a more smoothly functioning “interagency.”

This unique melding of the interagency with academia should not be undervalued, yet it is not a panacea. Although the innovative program shows tremendous promise, it remains extremely small and as yet untested. The proof of the concept will only come once its graduates prove their worth in future interagency assignments. Encouragingly, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has renewed the program for 2010-11, and ISP graduates will indeed have an opportunity to use their acquired expertise in key interagency positions. However, it is worth noting that funding restrictions are likely to prevent a substantial expansion of non-Defense Department personnel participation in the program even though it would benefit tremendously from students from other departments, especially State, Justice, Energy, and the CIA. Such restrictions are a prime example of a structural obstacle to interagency cooperation.

The current generation was not the first to discover problems with interagency processes, nor will it solve them. The challenge for contemporary American security practitioners is how to strike a useful balance between effective interagency action and an over-centralization of the security sector. Although it seems there is no Rosetta Stone for the interagency, innovative programs like the ISP represent a useful evolution in post-Cold War national security thought and are surely part of the solution. Only with the right educational foundation, and a government-wide commitment to interoperability, shared training, and necessary personnel incentives, can we adapt the structure and culture of our security system to the complex threat environment that we face today. **IAJ**

## NOTES

1 Rickey L. Rife and Rosemary Hansen, *Defense is from Mars, State is from Venus: Improving Communications and Promoting National Security* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1998), 207-210. See also, author conversation with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Vann Van Diepen, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation. Conversation conducted at the State Department, 22 June 2010.

2 Linda Camp Keith, “The US Supreme Court and Judicial Review of Congress: 1803-2001,” *Judicature* 90, No. 4 (January-February 2007): 169-170.

3 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th Cong. (October 1, 1986), § 3, paragraphs 6 and 8.

# *Rethinking* the Geographic Combatant Commands

**by Edward Marks**

Over the many years of the Cold War the United States military created a set of organizations called unified Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). They arose out of WWII and grew in size, complexity, and resources over the years to meet the Soviet challenge. Although this historical period is now over we are left with the GCCs, whose continued usefulness should be open to question.

Are the GCCs still a useful organization, or should they be significantly modified if not eliminated? Do they still make a positive contribution to U.S. national security or have they become obstacles to better national policy and programming? Have they outlived their usefulness? These are difficult questions, and answers that propose significant organizational change would be even more difficult to implement.

The combatant command “community” consists of two types, four global/functional commands such as Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) and Strategic Command (STRATCOM) and six geographic commands such as the European (EUCOM) and Pacific (PACOM) commands. The origin of the geographic organizations was the two global warfighting commands of World War II in the Pacific and in Europe. After the war, these commands were formalized as regional unified combatant commands, and eventually joined by SOUTHCOM for Latin American in 1963, CENTCOM for the Middle East in 1983, NORTHCOM in 2002, and then in a final burst of bureaucratic momentum, AFRICOM for Africa in 2007.

The importance and increasingly prominent role GCCs played in American foreign policy grew over the years as the contest of the Cold War wound its way to its conclusion. The end of the Cold War did not alter this trend as the Goldwater-Nichols reform of the defense community consolidated the geographic commands as operational organizations, and confirmed that U.S. military activity outside the U.S. territory was no longer a sporadic activity, confined to wartime, but now a normal activity

**Edward Marks is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the George Mason University School of Public Policy. He is a former U.S. Ambassador and career diplomat who served as a Deputy U.S. Representative to the United Nations and as the Department of State’s advisor on terrorism to the U.S. Pacific Command.**



pursued everywhere in the world. This activist role was then expanded further after September 11, 2001, with the consequent decision to consider countering the terrorist threat essentially a military task, and the involvement in two long-running wars which have morphed into military occupations involving counter-insurgency, post-conflict reconstruction, nation-building and economic development.

**With approximately a \$600 billion defense budget plus war costs compared to a significantly less than a \$100 billion diplomatic and foreign aid budget, we are dramatically under-resourced on the non-military side of the equation.**

During this period, the military services have increasingly become the default option for U.S. government action and response. This attitude has both fostered and been driven by the resourcing disparity in the federal bureaucracy, a disparity which has grown since 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq. With approximately a \$600 billion defense budget plus war costs compared to a significantly less than a \$100 billion diplomatic and foreign aid budget, we are dramatically under-resourced on the non-military side of the equation. This disparity is evidenced by the enormous growth in GCC activities, as well as the creation of a new GCC for Africa. In other words, since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. government has responded to the changing security and political environment by buying more and larger hammers.

The geographic commands have essentially two tasks: war planning and fighting, and military engagement programs. Both tasks remain, and will always remain, fundamental responsibilities of the Department of Defense and the military

services.

However while the war planning and fighting responsibility obviously remains uniquely a duty of the Department of Defense and the military services, the engagement programs no longer can be handled as a discrete military activity. In today's world, military engagement programs with other countries can only be seen as part of the overall engagement activity of the U. S. government. The so-called "nexus" of security challenges – terrorism, narcotics, smuggling, international criminal networks, etc. – can no longer be managed as single agency programs but must be integrated into "whole of government" programs.

Unfortunately the character of the geographic commands militates against effective whole-of-government engagement programs and therefore coherent foreign policy. First of all, the "stovepiped" organizational structure and perspective of the federal bureaucracy is an obstacle in itself to a comprehensive interagency approach. Among the federal government stovepipes DoD is notable for its robust character in general, its increasingly dominant role in national security matters, and the disparity of resources compared to other agencies. This disparity is reinforced by the unfortunate tendency for our political leadership to consider the military services the default mode in national security. Called upon, DoD – with the geographic commands as its agents – responds with alacrity if not always enthusiasm and in doing so, tends to sweep aside other agencies and departments. This is true even when senior political leadership does not consciously direct a unilateral military approach, as was the case in Iraq and for a while the so-called "war on terrorism."

The rich and available resource base of the military services – money, personnel, and equipment – stems of course from the undeniable resource requirements of war fighting. A number of other problems and challenges – such as natural disaster emergencies, post-conflict reconstruction, and nation building – also require

the extensive use of resources. Unfortunately the fact that these are essentially non-military tasks does not trump the temptation to use existing DoD resources to provide a quick response, not necessarily the correct or most effective response. That the military may not be the most appropriate organization to perform these tasks is irrelevant; they exist, are available and can react quickly. Once they are engaged they tend to continue with these tasks as it is difficult and time consuming to transfer the responsibility to civilian organizations as yet ill-equipped or non-existent. Bureaucratic as well as political inertia takes over.

Another problem with the GCCs arises from the changing character of the international environment and of current national security threats. The rigidly regional organization of the GCCs no longer comfortably fits with today's world. For instance, we are constantly being told that one of our major security challenges is international terrorism, and yet the lead for planning (and often conducting) military counterterrorism campaigns falls on the shoulder of Special Operations Command – a global, functional command. Another major security challenge is monitoring and securing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), a task that falls to another global, functional command – Strategic Command. In other words, the GCCs are not designated as the lead military organization for managing our two primary military challenges.

The other large bundle of duties which occupy much of the time, staff, and resources of the GCCs – security assistance and such – is pursued with little strategic vision, although generally with extensive strategic verbal justification. Engagement programs appear to be largely used as “walking around money” for geographic combatant commanders, their staffs, and military representatives in embassies. In any case, well-funded engagement budgets lead to much activity because they can be done, not because they should be done, in a pre-emptive version of “counting sorties” instead of seeking results. Examples of

both of these types of activities were noted by the author when he attended the annual security assistance “planning” conference at PACOM in the early years of this decade. There was no sign of any “strategic” planning (nor any presence by flag or general officers) but instead a scramble by each office and section chief to obtain funds for *their* “clients.” Commanders making high visibility visits during which they announce new or additional security assistance and exchange programs are common phenomena.

Finally, the regional perspective perverts both the war planning and fighting and military

**The rigidly regional organization of the GCCs no longer comfortably fits with today's world.**

engagement tasks conducted by the GCCs. The GCCs argue that their regional perspective is their primary virtue, that no one else in the U.S. government so successfully pursues this important aspect of current developments. However, in this attitude the GCCs have it wrong. Strict geographic regionalism is not in fact how the world is organized. Two major trends are moving us today – globalization on one end and localism on the other. Of course somewhere along this continuum there are regional developments and trends, but they are generally either sub-regional (e.g. The Horn of Africa) or cross regional lines (e.g. Pakistan-India).

Despite these questions about the continued usefulness of the geographic combatant command model, DoD moved to create a new GCC, AFRICOM or Africa Command. Since the original announcement of AFRICOM, its creation has produced a disjointed, and occasionally embarrassing, series of explanations of everything from its strategic justification, to



physical location, to organizational make-up. AFRICOM will never be able to overcome its unfortunate name in a region where the most toxic charge is “neo-colonist”. More important is that a serious strategic justification for the new organization has never been produced. In the absence of effective government in the majority of African countries, the local military organization is often a serious obstacle to true security and development and yet AFRICOM proposes a full spectrum program of engagement with no discussion or consideration of whether this is a good idea. Every task now listed on its website, a grab bag of miscellaneous tasks, could be more easily and cheaply pursued by and through the traditional military assistance program implemented by American embassies. And many, viewed soberly, should probably not be done at all. AFRICOM appears to be an organization in desperate search of a mission even though its reach, ambition, energy, resources, and unfortunate imperial title are making it the face – a military face – of the United States in Africa.

The harmful results of this GCC approach to engagement can be seen in the activities of AFRICOM with respect to military assistance and engagement. According to a recent Stimson Center report, the implementation by AFRICOM of the relatively new (and very large) DoD Section 1206 Train and Equip program is being pursued in accordance with different priorities and policy rational than the traditional (and actually smaller) Foreign Military Financing program administered by the State Department. The Defense Department believes that strengthening states to control their territory best prevents an Al Qaeda toehold on the continent. It’s ‘Building Partner Capacity’ mission flows from that belief. The State Department, by contrast, finds arming most African governments to be counterproductive for our democracy, development, and human rights agenda and, by extension, for the counterterrorism mission. Instead, development spending is its priority in Africa. Coordination is wholly lost between the

defense and diplomacy/development sides of the equation, with resulting strategy schizophrenia. Which approach is best is not the point here; what is important to note is that an energetic, well meaning, well financed and stovepiped GCC staff is working independently, with the result that the two departments are pursuing stovepiped programs.

The combination of extensive resources – money, staff, and personal airplanes – combined with wide-ranging authority has too often seduced the geographic commanders into playing the role of American political-military viceroys. In doing so, the commanders and their staffs have contributed significantly to the oft-noted militarization of American foreign relations. As experienced a commentator as retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, a former geographic commander himself, has commented on the outsized role of regional military commanders on the international scene and the resulting military face which the U.S. presents to the world. In international affairs, the civilian departments and agencies appear to be experiencing the difficult situation faced by mice forced to share a bed with an elephant. With the best will in the world, the elephant hogs the available space – especially if he is a restless sleeper. So to do the GCCs take up too much space in American international relations.

## **Proposal for Change**

But if the GCCs are too big and obsolete, what could replace them? The path to reform would be to separate the two portfolios. The war planning and fighting mission would go to two or perhaps three Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) – located in Hawaii, on the East or West Coasts, or perhaps in Florida where they could use the existing facilities built for Pacific Command, Southern Command and Central Command. If DoD insists that adequate war planning requires each geographic region to have its own SJFHQ, so be it, but these would be significantly downsized organizations from their

present incarnation.

Whether two, three, or six, each would be equipped with the staff and associated resources necessary to pursue war planning and assigned operational responsibilities, including the staffing, training, and deployment of Joint Task Forces for designated operations. In a sense, they would be GCCs “Lite,” focused on the mission of war fighting and still reporting to the President through the Secretary of Defense.

Withdrawn from these SJFHQs, the military engagement mission would be re-assigned to a new, unified support organization, located somewhere in the U.S. but preferably in the Washington area in order to be in close proximity to the Department of State, USAID, the intelligence community and other pertinent parts of the U.S. government. Within DoD this “engagement command” (Foreign Military Sales, Section 1206, etc) would report directly to the Joint Staff while operating downstream in support of beefed-up military representation in American embassies. This arrangement would recognize the essentially bilateral character of military engagement programs while providing for greater integration with coherent, overall foreign policy.

The functional combatant commands would not be affected by this proposed change. STRATCOM, TRANSCOM and Socom would be retained as presently constituted. Each has a mission relevant to today’s security environment. JFCOM might usefully combine in some way with the military ‘Schoolhouse,’ or at least the “joint” elements of it, although a recent announcement by Secretary of Defense Gates would appear to indicate that he feels the military could get along without it.

These changes would probably produce some staff savings, certainly at senior officer levels, and in operating costs if the current half dozen GCC headquarters are reorganized into smaller and more focused SJFHQs. More important, however, would be the gain from greater integration of the military engagement program into the broader whole-of-government of the United States.

In sum, the geographic combatant commands are obsolete – large, expensive, and clumsy bureaucratic organizations unsuited for the security challenges we face today. They obstruct efforts to obtain the kind of flexible, adroit, adjustable military capability that the current Secretary of Defense talks about. They have served their time and finished their mission, and, like good and faithful servants, need to step aside. While this proposal from outside the professional military community may at first be unwelcome, perhaps it could serve as the impulse for a discussion of the subject. After all, a pearl begins with the insertion of a grain of sand into an unsuspecting oyster. **IAJ**

# When *Unity of Effort* Is Not Enough

**by Terry McNamara**

One picture dominates most memories of the Vietnam War and its sad denouement—the line of people climbing a slender ladder to a roof top where a helicopter waited to take them out of their country and away from a collapsing regime. This scene of defeat continues to color our collective attitude toward a war in which so much American blood and treasure were expended to no apparent justifiable affect. Indeed, this trauma has bedeviled any consideration of involvement in other foreign military adventures for some 35 years after the last American’s ignominious departure from the roof of the Saigon Embassy.

Understandably, our leadership, both military and civil, has encouraged a degree of amnesia as regards Vietnam and to a lesser extent the war in Korea. Rather, they have refocused on the glories of the more distant past as they rebuild professional armed forces. This understandable reluctance to consider unpleasant memories has come at a cost, for one often learns more from failures than from successes.

More recently, the harsh realities of involvement in “limited wars” in the erstwhile Middle Eastern states of Iraq and Afghanistan have encouraged some inquisitive minds, such as John Nagl in *How to Eat Soup With a Knife*, to reconsider past experiences of unconventional warfare in such places as Malaysia, Algeria, and Vietnam. Sensibly, they sought techniques that might usefully be applied in current conflicts, albeit modified to suit local circumstances. General Petraeus’ field manual on counterinsurgency contains the fullest distillation of these enquiries into both historic and current experience in fighting such wars.

Since discussions of the Vietnam War have re-emerged, military analysts and historians can now consider the forgotten “Pacification Program” that enjoyed considerable success between 1968 and 1972. During that period, the Viet Cong infrastructure was decimated. Contrary to popular perception, the Tet Offensive, mounted in 1968, resulted in devastating losses of both Viet Cong and North

**Terry McNamara is a former Senior Foreign Service Officer who held ambassadorships in Gabon, Sao Tome and Cape Verde. During the Vietnam War he served with CORDS as a provincial advisor, as the first principal officer at the Consulate in Danang, and as the last U.S. Consul General in Can Tho. He is the author of two books: *The French in Black Africa* and *Escape With Honor*.**

Vietnamese soldiers and large numbers of their political cadre. The latter, vital to an insurgency, were not easily replaced. The incursion by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces into Cambodia also disrupted the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese's ability to support military action in South Vietnam. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces destroyed vital base camps, logistics, and headquarters facilities that had previously been inviolate sanctuaries.

Finally, the much reviled Phoenix Program further enfeebled the Viet Cong infrastructure by eliminating more of its precious cadre. Thus, by 1971, the populated parts of South Vietnam were firmly under friendly control and significant economic development was underway in the countryside, especially in the fertile, densely populated Mekong Delta of southern Vietnam. However, as in all such wars, no meaningful political or economic development is possible without a protective security envelope.

Security was the enabler in the struggle for the people's hearts and minds. To win the struggle, a majority of the citizenry had to believe it had a stake in perpetuating and defending the political and economic order. Successful economic development that demonstrably benefited the ordinary citizens who worked in the fields, the shops, and the offices would encourage such commitment.

Popular support for governance ideally completes a functioning, secure, nation state and was not fully in place when American forces left Vietnam in 1973. The best that could be said is that a large majority viewed the South Vietnamese government as the best of two poor choices. Clearly, the majority would not willingly have chosen to be governed by a government imposed and dominated by the North. Why else did so many brave the perils of escape on an inhospitable sea in tiny often unseaworthy boats after the collapse in 1975 of the Southern Regime.

## **The Birth of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)**

Prior to 1967, both the U.S. military and civilian agencies were engaged in facets of pacification. The military's provincial advisory activity was called Revolutionary Development Support. It functioned as an integral part of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). On the civilian side, various agencies initially carried out support and advisory activities in a traditional quasi-independent fashion with coordination effected at the "country team" level in Saigon.

In 1966 an effort was made to bring civilian activities in the provinces under the unified control of the Office of Civil Operations. The Deputy Ambassador, Alexis Johnson, was placed in overall charge with representatives in all regions and provinces. This half-a-loaf attempt at unity of effort was overtaken in less than a year with the formation of a fully unified civil/military organization enshrining the "single manager" concept.

The principal instrument of the pacification program in Vietnam became an innovation born in frustration in the midst of a bloody war. In 1967, some two years after our massive intervention in the war, President Lyndon B. Johnson was convinced that our pacification efforts were hopelessly disunited. Various civilian and military programs lacked coordination and often worked at cross purposes competing with one another in the field. Indeed, too often, they seemed to pursue contradictory goals. None of this was missed by the wily Vietnamese. Both enemy and ally alike were frequently able to exploit the seams that existed between unaware Americans. Among civilian agencies, differences and jealousies resulted in diminished unity of effort. Over time, it became evident that only the military possessed the resources—some 80 percent of the

resources devoted to the pacification program—and organizational structure needed to marshal huge national programs in a war situation. The civilian agencies, however, had the relevant expertise in areas critical to pacification, such as economic development, governance, public relations in a foreign environment, and public administration. When this disconnect was brought to the President's attention, he reportedly concluded that all of the tools and resources available to the U.S. government for pacification must be brought together and integrated into the military command structure. To give form to the President's instruction, Robert Komer, then Special Assistant to the President for Vietnam, proposed in a memo to Johnson that an organization be established following the 'single manager' concept to unite all provincial advisory groups—both military and civilian. This proposed organization, called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), would be an internally independent part of MACV under the overall command of

President Kennedy had sent General Maxwell Taylor to Saigon as his ambassador. Foreseeable resistance to such an appointment arose from the State Department; Ellsworth Bunker, who was being considered for the ambassador post, and Westmoreland himself. Johnson's purpose, if indeed he was responsible for the rumor, was never clear. The result, however, was to frighten the civilian agencies with the prospect of being taken over by the military. To preclude such an outcome, they quickly acquiesced in pooling their personnel and other resources in a new joint advisory organization that would be part of a military command, albeit under civilian leadership. Bunker is said to have suggested, perhaps at Johnson's prompting, that CORDS would give civilians control of military assets. In any case, whatever the exact scenario, the President got his way, and CORDS was born with little overt resistance from within the U.S. bureaucracy.

To the astonishment of many, Komer proposed that a civilian be named to head the new organization with the title of Deputy Commander of MACV for Pacification. Unified teams were to be constituted at the regional, provincial, and district levels. Civilians, with the title of Deputy Commander for CORDS, would head the four regional teams. At the critical province level, half the provincial senior advisors (PSA) would be civilians with military deputies and the other half would be military with civilian deputies. Following the single manager principle, the PSA, as the American counterpart of the Vietnamese province chief, was the principal American voice in the province and commander of all American members of his advisory team, military and civilian, at both the provincial and the district levels. Resources from all agencies involved in pacification were to be pooled for use by the unified organization. CORDS was authorized and given a presidential *imprimatur* in a 1967 National Security Action Memorandum with the blessing of both General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker.

**CORDS was authorized and given a presidential *imprimatur* in a 1967 National Security Action Memorandum with the blessing of both General Westmoreland and Ambassador Bunker.**

General William Westmoreland.

The political maneuvering that preceded the establishment of CORDS involved a typical Johnsonian shaping operation. First, rumors appeared suggesting that the President was considering naming Westmoreland as ambassador to Vietnam. It was never clear whether this diplomatic appointment might be concurrent with the General's post as Commander MACV. There was a precedent of sorts for such an appointment;

To his initial chagrin, Robert Komer was named the first Deputy Commander MACV for Pacification; he had hoped to become Deputy Ambassador. To ease his disappointment, Komer was accorded the personal title of ambassador with a position of enormous power. Indeed, Komer never let anyone forget that his rank was the equivalent, in military hierarchical terms, of a four-star general. On the MACV organizational chart, he ranked at the same level as General Creighton Abrams who was General Westmoreland's other deputy and his ultimate successor. Komer was probably the first senior civilian official to exercise command authority in an American military organization actively engaged in war time operations. Service secretaries and normal ambassadors may exercise some command authority, but they have not done so in the field during ongoing combat. Komer was never shy in asserting his authority. Indeed, he well deserved his nickname—"Blowtorch". Without this aggressive, assertive personality at its head, CORDS might not have survived and would certainly not have been as successful as it was in driving and orchestrating the Pacification Program.

Unity of command with strong civilian command participation extended throughout CORDS from the center in Saigon, through the regions, to the provinces. In its later days, there were even some civilian senior district advisors. Komer firmly maintained that the CORDS chain of command be respected. For example, when an Army colonel serving as a province senior advisor fell sick and was absent from his post for several weeks, the commanding general of the XXIV Corps, in charge of operations in that region, insisted a senior officer from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division take temporary command of the CORDS team. He was forced to back down when informed the deputy province senior advisor had already assumed command with the knowledge and support of CORDS headquarters in Saigon. This was not an unusual incident. Wisely, Komer's view was to keep CORDS

chain of command distinct from the purely military advisory effort assigned to the regular Vietnamese Army (ARVN).

CORDS did, however, retain substantial responsibilities for advising and equipping local security forces. The regional forces (RF) and provincial forces (PF), commanded by the province chiefs, were advised by CORDS personnel as were the police. This arrangement could lead to misunderstandings as these indigenous forces were full time soldiers whose units were often involved in combat alongside

**Unity of command with strong civilian command participation extended throughout CORDS from the center in Saigon, through the regions, to the provinces.**

regular ARVN and U.S. units. Differences were usually settled amicably, but more serious difficulty could result from the ambiguity in command structures.

As finally configured, CORDS included all of the aspects and resources involved in pacification, aside from the regular U.S. and ARVN units and advisors serving with ARVN. Its programs included psychological operations, public safety, amnesty of former Viet Cong, all economic development aid programs, Revolutionary Cadre (a CIA administered program), and the RF/PF advisory and logistics support effort. Most CIA activities were never fully integrated into CORDS, even when elements of CORDS were participating in the Phoenix Program.

## **CORDS Success**

Much of CORDS later success was due to Bob "Blowtorch" Komer's clear foresight and aggressive persistence. He insisted on being a



full member of the MACV command group, as well as having a place at the country team's head table. The integrity of CORDS as a stand-alone operation within the framework of MACV was his constant preoccupation. He insisted on the

**Perceiving strong presidential support for the program, constituent agencies assigned some of their best people to CORDS. The Army made PSA tours especially attractive by equating them with battalion and brigade command tours.**

full integration of CORDS chain of command with military officers writing civilian Foreign Service Officer's (FSO) efficiency reports and vice-versa. The single manager concept so dear to Harvard Business School gurus was put into practice with a vengeance by Master of Business Administration alumnus Komer, as a matter of best management practice. Perhaps most telling, Komer used his widely presumed close relationship with the President as a sheathed weapon, but one that he always appeared ready to use. Perceiving strong presidential support for the program, constituent agencies assigned some of their best people to CORDS. The Army made PSA tours especially attractive by equating them with battalion and brigade command tours. The number of Army officers who were assigned to CORDS who later rose to flag rank is a good indication of their quality (one district senior advisor, General John Shalikashvili, became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff). The State Department was equally generous in assigning some of its best FSOs. From 1969, the Director General of the Foreign Service insisted that all new appointments to the FSO corps must agree to a CORDS first assignment in Vietnam

as a condition of appointment. Many senior officers went to Vietnam voluntarily or were given directed assignments. A special feature of a CORDS assignment for junior and even middle grade officer was that it afforded unusual opportunities for an FSO to gain significant managerial experience at a relatively early stage in his career. Indeed, a good number of CORDS alumni rose to ambassadorial rank in the Foreign Service. This too was a mark of the quality of officers assigned and of the usefulness of the CORDS experience.

A major factor in the success of pacification was General Abram's refocusing U.S. strategy in Vietnam after assuming command of MACV in late 1968. Pacification became the main effort rather than the earlier will-o-the-wisp emphasis on "search and destroy" tactics. This was a tardy recognition that the people were the prize in a counterinsurgency campaign and should be the principal focus. This change in strategy was especially good news to the CORDS side of the MACV house; greater support for pacification by U.S. and ARVN regular units would assure better security for economic development and for villages that were undecided or who had already committed to the government side. Thus the balance in the countryside began to shift noticeably from late 1969. This favorable situation would persist until American forces completed their withdrawal early in 1973.

## **A New Broom**

A change in CORDS leadership in 1969 did not result in any loss of momentum in the Pacification Program. By the time Komer departed for a quieter diplomatic post as ambassador in Turkey, CORDS was well established and secure in its relations with both Vietnamese counterparts and MACV colleagues. Bill Colby, Komer's successor and later Director of the CIA, was an experienced old hand in Vietnam. He had been Komer's deputy for over a year, and his involvement with Vietnam extended back to 1959. He knew all the senior

figures in the Vietnamese political elite and was well acquainted with those in Washington who dealt with Vietnamese issues. Colby was just as dedicated to success in Vietnam and to CORDS as an organization as Komer had been. The men differed in demeanor but not in determination. Colby was the iron fist in the velvet glove. Komer wore his toughness on his sleeve.

As the calendar turned from the turbulent 1960s to a seemingly more tranquil new decade, the densely populated Mekong delta and low lands along the coast were largely free of Viet Cong units. The Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese mentors were recovering and reconstituting in North Vietnam sanctuaries and across the borders in Cambodia and Laos. At the same time, the Viet Cong leadership were being steadily eliminated by an active Phoenix Program, and the complaints that encouraged discontent among the rural population were being satisfied by development initiatives then beginning to come to fruition. These most notably included redistribution of land to those who actually tilled it; introduction of new strains of “miracle rice” developed in the Philippines that yielded three to four times more than traditional varieties; opening of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded rural banks in every province aimed at providing affordable finance to farmers who previously were held in thrall by Chinese money lenders; importation of Japanese built “long bore” outboard motors that doubled as motive power for small boats and as irrigation pump during the dry season; and the introduction of additional sources of family income, such as fish farming on the Mekong River. Prosperity was coming to Vietnam’s rural population, especially in the more fertile areas of the south. With it, incentive to lose their sons either to the Viet Cong or to the ARVN was fast fading.

I saw the improvements for myself on a trip in 1970 to the rich Mekong Delta province of Vinh Long, where I had served in CORDS some two years earlier. On a trip to Saigon, Ambassador

Bunker asked me to go to Vinh Long to assess the accuracy of reports he had been receiving of great improvements in security, prosperity, and attitudes towards the Saigon government in the Delta region. During a weeklong visit, I drove without security escort throughout the province, including areas where one would not have dared visit two years earlier without a full battalion of friendly infantry. Farmers peacefully worked in their paddies, markets were full of goods and

**The Viet Cong may have suffered near mortal damage in the south, but the North Vietnamese had not given up their ambitions. Their calculation now rested on a waiting game for the expected departure of the last Americans.**

customers, and large numbers of civilian trucks made their way up National Route 4 toward the markets of Saigon heavily laden with the produce of the fertile Delta.

Unfortunately, the same was not true for the provinces north of Saigon especially the area just south of the demilitarized zone, and along the Cambodian and Laotian borders. The Viet Cong may have suffered near mortal damage in the south, but the North Vietnamese had not given up their ambitions. Their calculation now rested on a waiting game for the expected departure of the last Americans. With American formidable firepower gone, they believed it would be easier to deal with the South Vietnamese.

### **Composition of CORDS Teams**

A typical provincial CORDS team consisted of 250 personnel, mostly military, predominately Army. The civilian members were a mixed bag. Many were hired on contract by USAID for service in Vietnam. The largest career contingent



was from the State Department that contributed a significant proportion of its small, elite FSO corps. The bulk of regular USAID employees were not working in CORDS. Rather, they were employed in Saigon dealing with the large national USAID Program. The CIA had a mix of regular employees who provided supervision to a large number of temporary “gun slingers” and others who made up the big battalions the agency needed to service its part of the war. A small part of the CIA personnel in country were assigned to CORDS as cadre advisors. Retired and former military personnel, many of whom had previously served in Vietnam, were well represented on CORDS teams. They were of uneven quality with outstanding examples at both ends of the spectrum. The late John Paul Vann, a former military officer, was an example of the most effective people that served with CORDS.

Late in the war, USAID sensibly hired a group of former Peace Corps Volunteers, some of whom left Vietnam with me on a small boat down the Mekong on the last day of the war. Other agencies contributed smaller numbers of people with special skills. The U.S. Information Service, for instance, sent members of their Foreign Service to run information programs and lead armed propaganda teams. The Department of Agriculture contributed skilled agronomists, who helped introduce new crops and more advanced agricultural techniques. In all, the civilian members of CORDS acquitted themselves well.

### **Lesson to Be Learned From Cords**

Clearly, history never repeats itself in detail. Nonetheless, there are useful lessons that can be drawn from past experiences, albeit with appropriate caveats. There is broad agreement that future conflicts will demand whole-of-government solutions. The U.S. experience with limited conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq confirms the need for engaging all elements of power, both military and civil, in coping with conflict that can best be described as an insurgency. In a different environment, facing a different enemy,

the response might have to be different, tailored to the particular nature of the threat and the character of the enemy. In any case, the need to bring to bear all of the appropriate elements of national power in an orchestrated fashion almost certainly will be as necessary in any likely future conflict as it is in the current ones. Lessons taken from a war that was unsuccessfully concluded could be particularly instructive. In Vietnam, the U.S. government learned some harsh lessons, which were applied late in the day—too late, as it turned out. Nonetheless, CORDS was one of the most interesting and most successful innovations developed during the Vietnam War.

Analysts and historians may draw the following specific conclusions from the CORDS experience in Vietnam:

1. A joint civil-military organization can effectively operate a large program with personnel and resources drawn from several agencies and services.
2. Civilian leaders can successfully function in command positions in an essentially military organization.
3. The single manager principle, so revered by management theorists, is valid as an effective means of organizing interagency action-oriented organizations that include both military and civilian personnel.
4. The best person for the job, whether military or civilian, is the soundest way of providing effective leadership in an insurgency environment.
5. Command support is vital in overcoming reluctance to accept innovative change. Presidential directive and continued support were the essential ingredients in gaining acceptance of the CORDS concept by both civilian and military officials with deep-seated interests and cultural bias.
6. Strong leadership is essential to gaining acceptance of a hybrid organization like CORDS.

Without a “Blowtorch” Komer type in charge, with perceived presidential backing, CORDS would most likely have been suffocated in the cradle.

7. “Unity of effort” is no substitute for “unity of command,” especially in war time. This lesson was learned the hard way in Vietnam. The Office of Civil Operations experiment, described earlier, was a half-a-loaf attempt to bring about cooperation without including the thousand pound bear— the U.S. military. The most effective means of getting things done is to give one individual and/or a single entity responsibility and corresponding authority.

### **Possible Application of Vietnam Lessons**

Despite initial reluctance, provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) were set up in both Iraq and Afghanistan. They have, to a degree, followed the CORDS model in slightly different forms without taking the final step of full integration with unity of command at all levels. Even General Petraeus continues to speak of unity of effort as the ideal interagency *modus-operandi*. Vietnam and the British experience in Malaysia would suggest the contrary. With no one clearly in charge, agencies and individuals, even with good will on all sides, inevitably have different interests and preferred ways of doing things. The best that can be hoped for is compromise and constant negotiation. Regrettably, the weakness of divided responsibility and authority has been displayed in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Afghanistan appears to be an example of the most dangerous form of divided leadership. The U.S. has a powerful military commander with independent access to the President. At the same time, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry is a retired general and the former military commander in Afghanistan, who has his own well-formed strategic ideas. His disagreements over military strategy with former military commander

General Stanley McChrystal and his unflattering views of the Afghan Chief of State have been well publicized. A further element in the complex American leadership mix in dealing with the Kabul government is a special representative with a notoriously strong personality, decided ideas, and interest of his own. Occasionally, other prominent figures drop in to Kabul for a chat with President Karzai. In these circumstances, one might well ask “how can the Afghans be sure who really speaks with the full authority of the U.S. government and for the President of the United States?”

Some of this confusion is inevitable, but it might be limited by appointing one representative in Kabul who speaks and acts with full authority. In normal circumstance, this figure would be

**Despite initial reluctance, provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) were set up in both Iraq and Afghanistan. They have, to a degree, followed the CORDS model in slightly different forms without taking the final step of full integration with unity of command at all levels.**

the ambassador. In this instance, however, the ambassador already seems a wounded figure whose relations with President Karzai are said to be gravely weakened. In any case, the Afghan Chief of State may feel that he can safely ignore the ambassador as he has multiple other prestigious interlocutors. Press reports suggest that special envoy Holbrooke’s relationship with Kabul may also be troubled. This seems to leave only General Petraeus untarnished among those senior officials now assigned Afghan responsibilities. Providentially, he seems an ideal candidate for the role of American voice in Kabul.

In fact, he may already be the *de facto* principal American interlocutor with the Afghan government. Reportedly, he meets with Karzai about once a day — far more often than the U.S. ambassador.

If General Petraeus were given additional *de jure* status by naming him ambassador he would have undisputed control of all American official personnel and resources in Afghanistan. Alternatively, he could be given the power without the title. Such an arrangement might go down more easily among those who worry about a too powerful military. Certainly, few could challenge General Petraeus on the basis that he is not well qualified. He has demonstrated rare gifts as both a military commander and

as a sure-footed political operator. There are precedents of sorts for giving similar powers to a general. MacArthur in post-war Japan comes readily to mind. Another less well remembered example is Maxwell Taylor who moved from being Kennedy's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to being ambassador to Saigon. Clearly, they exercised authority over both military and civilian resources. In Taylor's case, his powers in the military realm were a matter of fact rather than a formal designation as military commander.

**Management theory and historical experience both indicate that a unified command including all relevant elements of national power is likely to enjoy the greatest measure of success in this kind of war...**

Such an arrangement in Kabul could neatly solve the problem of unity of command. Further organizational unification of effort would be easier with a common leader in charge. One possible organizational solution would be for the ambassador/commander to have three deputies: one dealing with the more classic military subjects, such as the direction of the regular International Security Assistance Force units and the training of the Afghan Army; the second in charge of a network of PRTs and for police and judiciary training, much like the role of Komer in Vietnam; and a third running the embassy as Deputy Chief of Mission overseeing the country team. Ideally, the first deputy would be a senior military officer and the second and third deputies would be civilians. Leadership of the PRTs would be based on the best person for the job, whether military or civilian, based on the CORDS model as modified to conform to local needs. Whatever configuration is chosen it should conform to the principles of unity of command and best person for the job.

General Petraeus may not be the only or even the best candidate for the task of bringing together the various elements of American power and speaking with one coherent voice to both allies and enemies. Nonetheless the need for such a unity of command in Afghanistan is clear and urgent. Management theory and historical experience both indicate that a unified command including all relevant elements of national power is likely to enjoy the greatest measure of success in this kind of war as in other complex endeavors. Extraordinary times call for the employment of extraordinary means. **IAJ**

# Concepts and Systems for *States in Crisis*

**by Nicholas Riegg**

United States government agencies are grappling with what they need to do to successfully meet the challenges of post-conflict contingencies and failed states that require assistance in developing more effective political, economic, and societal institutions.

The military's relatively new "full spectrum" approach to warfare emphasizes that the military and other U.S. interagency partners must address the full gamut of needs of nations defeated in war or in need of humanitarian assistance due to natural or manmade catastrophes. To date, U.S. interagency partners discuss which organizations are going to focus on what needs, but give little attention to defining the attributes of well-functioning political, economic, informational, and cultural institutions. Military manuals and civilian agency policies say little about what options or types of political institutions or processes can achieve sustainable peace, justice, and progress; which types should ordinarily be avoided; or what economic mechanisms can efficiently and acceptably meet economic ends. There is very little in standing policy that defines what sorts of operational or tactical measures agencies and officers on the ground should take to assure that U.S. national strategic objectives are met. The purpose of this article is to stimulate a dialogue on such matters.

In this article the term "interagency" refers strictly to the various departments, agencies, and other instrumentalities of the executive branch of the U.S. government. While an agency may interact with or utilize the talent and resources of non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, international organizations, state and local governments, or coalition partners and allies, this paper only addresses issues concerning the executive agencies themselves.

Why in 2010 is the nation focusing so much on interagency cooperation and coordination? The answer lies largely in the persistence of international terrorism and uneven progress in the post-conflict stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan. There is broad consensus that terrorism is something that must be countered by all instrumentalities of the nation, not just the military. In the case of

**Nicholas Riegg is an Associate Professor of Strategy and Diplomacy at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He is a former Foreign Service Officer with a Ph.D. in macro- and developmental economics, and served as a Diplomat in Residence and instructor of graduate political economy at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.**

Iraq and Afghanistan, there is some feeling that had interagency coordination been better and had interagency objectives been better chosen, those two countries would be more secure, socially stable, democratic, and economically dynamic than they are today.

Another reason for the interest in interagency coordination is the growing awareness throughout government and society that various failing or dysfunctional states around the world could fall into anarchy, become breeding grounds for terrorists, upset regional stability, threaten the smooth functioning of global markets, or exacerbate international ideological conflicts. A whole-of-government or comprehensive effort will be needed to bring those nations into a more stable and productive condition.

**If the U.S. is to help struggling nations, any interagency group must be expert in the history of what types of political, economic and other social institutions have and have not worked well in various, relevant situations.**

## Concepts

If the U.S. is to help struggling nations, any interagency group must be expert in the history of what types of political, economic and other social institutions have and have not worked well in various, relevant situations. This expertise cannot be overemphasized. If an interagency team works in a well-integrated and efficient manner, but tries to impose or acquiesces in the formation of inappropriate or weak institutions, laws, and procedures, all of its outstanding teamwork will be for naught.

As shown in several of the Federalist Papers, the founding fathers knew well the history of

numerous failed republics from classical times, as well as the mechanisms by which stable, but less-than-democratic states assured their endurance. Such knowledge led the founders to adopt institutions—including adequately representative, adequately decisive, and adequately balanced ones—that had been shown by history to be effective. Similarly they avoided those that had too often led to failure — including overly broad representation, indecisive electoral systems, and unchecked powers.

The wisdom of the founding fathers is not very evident in the political advice the U.S. has given Iraq. The acquiescence of the U. S. in Iraq's adoption of its current form of electoral system strongly suggests that advisors were ignorant of the problems that typically accompany such proportional representation (PR) systems. As was predictable, the adopted electoral system has contributed powerfully to the creation of numerous small, divisive factions and parties; legislators more dependent on and accountable to their party bosses than to their constituents; coalition governments dependent on the whims of the smallest of parties; parliamentary gridlock on critical economic and political issues; widespread corruption; and an unnecessarily weak executive. In 2010, it has been more than eight months since elections and a government has yet to be formed.

The point is not that Iraq would have a virtuous political situation except for proportional representation; rather it is that PR fans the flames of political vice, which naturally exists in every society. PR typically brings the sorts of political instability that has been seen since the end of WWII in Italy, Greece and Brazil. In contrast, countries such as Britain and the U.S., which have avoided PR and instead instituted single member constituencies, tend to have more stable, less corruptible systems. Countries such as France that have moved from PR to single member constituencies also have moved from the ranks of the unstable to those of the more stable.

By adopting proportional representation, Iraq has moved itself from one extreme to another,

from Saddam Hussein's decisive but tyrannical authoritarianism, to a weak, indecisive, more corrupt form of government. When a voter in the city of Baghdad has to select 52 representatives out of a field of several hundred candidates representing dozens of parties, he or she is overwhelmed. All that can be done is to vote for a party and allow the party's non-transparent, non-accountable processes to run the political system.

The prognosis for Iraq's future under proportional representation certainly does not suggest the operation of a model democracy or the development of a vibrant economy, which were among the stated objectives of the U.S. when it invaded the country in 2003. To avoid helping to create another weak or failing political system in the next country the U.S. seeks to assist, future interagency efforts must be better informed by history, practice, and competent political theory.

In addition to getting political institutions right, knowing what types of economic concepts, mechanisms, and systems have and have not worked in various situations will be important if agencies are to assist failing nations in achieving sustained economic development. One cannot expect knowledge-intensive and capital-intensive economic systems, such as those that operate in the U.S. and other highly developed nations, to be appropriate or workable in nations with very low per capita income or education. There may be some similarity in basic principles, but successful institutional forms will necessarily be very different. One can learn much that is relevant for post-conflict and lesser-developed economies from the historical development of the U.S. and other advanced economies as well as from the more recent history of successfully emerging economies.

What sorts of specific concepts should optimally guide interagency coordination in full spectrum warfare or, especially, in the stabilization and rejuvenation of chaotic, dysfunctional, or failing states? While there are many ways to approach that question, focusing

on factors that states generally need in order to be politically stable and economically dynamic is a start. These factors may be sorted into three groups: perceptions of the population; institutions and principles for political stability; and economic principles.

**One cannot expect knowledge-intensive and capital-intensive economic systems...to be appropriate or workable in nations with very low per capita income or education.**

### *Perceptions of the population*

The following perceptions contribute to political stability:

- A general sense of justice among the population.
- A sense that oneself or one's group has adequate representation in governance.
- A sense that the government is strong, cannot be easily changed, and can enforce decisions.
- A sense that the government is both decisive and reflects the ethos of the population.
- A sense that the political situation will not significantly interfere with daily life.
- A sense that economic conditions will not worsen and may improve.
- A sense of national identity and pride that competes with (or trumps) more local or other separating identities.

If a large majority of people in a country have the above perceptions, the country is likely to be relatively stable; albeit, if a significant minority does not share those perceptions and is willing to fight, peace may break down. Most societies



develop some type of policy-setting, policy-enforcing, and juridical institutions to help assure that people generally share those stabilizing perceptions; to make the perceptions reflect reality; to limit disruptions from malcontents; and to develop competent, effective, and efficient governance. To build identity and pride, nations may also create or preserve various cultural institutions and sites, including (but not limited to) memorials, statues, temples, centers for the performing arts, museums, zoos, libraries and even sports arenas. In a post-conflict situation, an occupying force will want to assure that such cultural sites are protected as well as assuring that those important perceptions are maintained.

**But political perceptions and political institutions alone cannot guarantee a stable, much less a culturally and economically dynamic society.**

### *Institutions and principles for political stability*

For political institutions to assure national political stability, they must generally have all, or a large majority of the following characteristics:

- Adequately fair and effective judicial systems.
- Adequate policing and enforcement of justice.
- Security forces to keep the peace and protect the nation.
- A forum or council (usually a legislature), in which the divergent views of the society's key poles of power may be expressed, debated, negotiated and resolved in order to avoid disorder and (hopefully) achieve social progress.

- Representation in government that includes at least those major poles of social power that can mobilize people and resources sufficient to disrupt the operations of the state. If disagreements cannot be negotiated in the forum, conflict and possibly civil war are more likely.
- Widespread suffrage and democratic representation. (While desirable, these two principles may not be critical, popular, or practical in all situations, as Aristotle and Plato long ago recognized.)
- Executive leadership and societal mechanisms that will pressure the poles of power, forums, parliaments, and councils to reach consensus in a timely manner.
- An executive that is decisive and has adequate independence and power to firmly lead the nation.
- Adequate checks and balances, not just among the national branches of government, but also among the national, local, and/or regional levels of government.
- An adequate number of counterbalancing poles of power in the society itself, outside of the formal government, to assure that no single group can achieve a monopoly on political power.

Many forms of progressive, stable government have developed over the centuries, including some forms of liberal monarchy and many types of parliamentary democracy, including the U.S. system. Some forms are stronger in certain dimensions than others, and some are very weak in many of the above characteristics. In a post conflict situation or in giving assistance to a dysfunctional state, the U.S. and its partners need to take great care as to what type of political system exists or is adopted. But political perceptions and political institutions alone cannot guarantee a stable, much less a culturally and economically dynamic society.

Arts, letters, sciences, philosophy (or religion), education, economics, health, communication, and particular social values must also develop.

### ***Economic principles***

The following institutions and principles contribute to dynamic economic stability\*:

- Functioning product and service markets that allow freedom of entry to new buyers and sellers.
- Functioning factor (land, labor, capital) markets with pricing that reflects supply and demand.
- A stable monetary unit (currency) and adequate banking facilities.
- Good commercial law and arbitration/adjudication processes.
- Fair and economically efficient tax systems that fully fund legitimate governmental functions.
- Social, cultural, and fiscal incentives and mechanisms for saving and the accumulation of capital.
- Export industries to generate foreign exchange inflows for domestic investment needs.
- Low tariffs on industrial inputs and capital needed by the export sector.
- Full cost pricing of public goods.
- Development of industries (e.g., manufacturing) that can absorb large amounts of labor, particularly as medical advances spur population growth and agricultural mechanization reduces the need for farm labor.
- Physical and legal protection of legitimate, private, financial, and intellectual property, as well as real property, whether the property is for personal or commercial purposes.
- Allowance for corporate, limited liability companies as well as private or partnership forms of business.
- Public understanding that governments cannot create money or wealth and that adequate taxes are a requisite for maintaining effective, useful government.
- Mechanisms which allow enlightened self interest to operate, particularly in the provision of public goods that have large externalities and improve the skills and capabilities of the society (e.g., education, public health, industrial and other standards, and some regulatory regimes).

If the U.S. or other nations wish to bring stability to either a post-war or failing state situation, they—through their various implementing agencies or interagency processes—will need policies and practices that seek to establish at least the perceptions, institutions, and economic principles noted above. If they are not focused on these concepts and if their operations and tactics are not aimed, in particular, at designing and achieving well functioning institutions, they are unlikely to produce the substantive conditions needed to realize either sustained political or economic stability.

### **Systems**

A system is the set of relations, means, and mechanisms a group of individuals or entities use to coordinate actions toward some end or set of ends. A system can be thought of as a collection of nodes (actors) and links (relations or connections). A system can be centrally controlled, or it may be decentralized, so that each actor determines his own method of contributing to the desired end state. Military organizations, some corporations,

---

\* The term “dynamic economic stability” refers to an economy that is growing and growing in a manner that can generally be sustained over many decades; although, there may be significant variations in the rate of growth, with periodic bouts of slow growth, excessive growth, recession, inflation, and depression.



**It is no longer sufficient for diplomats to interact only or even mainly with members of existing governments.**

American football and command economies typically use relatively centralized, directed systems. In contrast, free market economies, academic institutions, the international web and soccer teams typically use more decentralized approaches to meet their ends.

Interagency cooperation and coordination in the U. S. has typically been decentralized. Each agency has largely determined for itself how it will contribute to meeting national policy goals. There are always consultations, but the nature of the system of checks and balances has historically provided independence in these matters to each department and specialized agency. While others argue for more centralized direction of interagency efforts, this article assumes the decentralized approach will largely persist. Accordingly, the question arises as to how the decentralized system can be adjusted to achieve better coordination than it has in the past, particularly in situations of the sort faced in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This article proposes that the interagency system can be improved by strengthening the concepts and incentives as well as the links among the nodes (agencies) of the system. An interagency system that is trying to assist foreign nations emerging from conflict or otherwise struggling to escape from impoverished, dysfunctional, chaotic, economically stagnant, or a deteriorating situation should have clear concepts based on expertise about what is needed and what the options are for meeting those needs. Each agency should also understand the capabilities and requirements of other agencies and develop better, deeper, and broader modes of consultation and reciprocal support. Given the

divergence in size, personnel, and budget among the agencies, better coordination will also require some upgrade in the capacities of various nodes.

The Department of State, in particular, should at least double the size of the Foreign Service to develop a corps of specialists who can actively advise and provide educational input to struggling nations in both political organization and economic development. It is no longer sufficient for diplomats to interact only or even mainly with members of existing governments. In countries with some form of democracy or a relatively large economic, academic, media, or other societal powerful sectors, diplomats should hear views from and share ideas with those who may be in future governments or have substantial influence on government policies.

While different types of decentralized systems exist in the corporate and other worlds, many elements of the centralized system the military uses can be usefully adapted by other federal agencies and, somewhat counterintuitively, by the overall decentralized interagency process. Those elements include the following:

- Developing manuals, publications, and other material that cover substantive principles, policies, and concepts (not simply rules and administrative procedures), which are widely distributed to guide officials. Such material provides a common reference point from which officers from different organizational units can coordinate their operations.
- Developing critical types of information about countries and regions in which the U.S. may have to operate to protect American interests or assist a nation in distress. This information should go beyond what is needed for successful war fighting, and focus on what is needed to transform countries and regions into positive contributors to the global community.
- Planning well ahead of time for contingencies in various regions, including plans that will

help to stabilize states and regions and, where possible, minimize or avoid the need to use military force.

- Reviewing and clarifying U.S. interests, ends, ways, and means in approaching or handling a contingency.
- Distinguishing among plans, resources, and organizational requirements needed for meeting strategic, operational, and tactical objectives.
- Setting priorities and estimating the conditions, likelihood, or timeframe in which a contingency may occur.
- Applying cost-benefit analysis, program budgeting, marginal analysis, system stabilization, and other types of analytic tools to plans, interagency relations, and unit responsibilities.
- Maintaining substantive and regular communications among interagency actors from the strategic to the tactical level, both to keep information and plans up to date and to coordinate activities when implementing plans.
- Conducting regular educational or refresher courses (every three to five years) to keep officers from the various agencies current with new, relevant information and to bring officers from various agencies together to learn and work to build stronger bonds among agencies.
- Developing comparable groups (cones, branches, specialties) within each agency of officers who are well versed in the types of operations needed to stabilize nations in distress.
- Conducting a regular program of practical exercises or role playing scenarios in which interagency officers rehearse stabilization operations.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list

of systemic tools and principles, only to hit some of the high points. As executive agencies move ahead in this new field, more of what they need to adapt from the military and corporate America will become evident.

Is it surprising that a retired, force-averse diplomat is advocating adapting force-focused military systems? It should not be. The military is the largest element of government by many orders of magnitude. It has developed good systems to handle its many components. Adapting what it has already done makes far more sense than reinventing the proverbial wheel or trying to draw much from the limited systems of other agencies.

**Is it surprising that a retired, force-averse diplomat is advocating adapting force-focused military systems?**

## Conclusion

Interagency coordination requires a better development and explication of a common set of concepts that should guide executive agencies in all types of national security planning. A common set of concepts is particularly important in those cases where agencies expect to bring stability to nations that have suffered from war, mismanagement, or natural catastrophe and have not had a history of effective democracy or widespread economic prosperity. A common set of concepts can lead to a better unity of effort in what will probably always be a fairly decentralized mode of interagency interaction. Beyond concepts and substantive principles, better interagency coordination will surely require better systems and mechanisms. The military has developed several types that could be usefully adapted and adopted by other agencies in a collaborative fashion.

In addition to developing better concepts and systems to guide interagency efforts in struggling nations, there are a number of practical considerations. A future paper will address such considerations in more detail; however, one practical consideration is the fact that civilian agencies must be greatly expanded in size if they are to be able to contribute adequately to nation-rescuing operations. Appropriate specializations and training within each agency and jointly among agencies are also requisite. In addition, the military must update its principles (doctrinal manuals) and educational objectives, including those concerning political matters and economics, to better utilize interagency strengths and meet the needs of struggling nations.

Executive agencies have a lot to do to make interagency cooperation a more meaningful term and to assure that what they do in an interagency setting achieves the articulated end state. Making the effort will minimize long term threats to national interests that currently abide in states rising from the ashes of war or suffering from dysfunctional social, political, and economic policies. **IAJ**

# Navigating Interagency *Education and Training Courses*

**by John Dyson**

While interagency education and training have long been staples of the intelligence and law enforcement communities, such efforts are still in their infancy elsewhere in the U.S. government. To successfully meet today's national security challenges, the U.S. government needs to do a better job at promoting a whole-of-government approach to interagency education and training. This article reviews the status of various education and training programs and examines their strengths, weaknesses, and outstanding needs.

In the past, many executive branch departments and agencies have placed more emphasis on experience and home-agency training than on interaction in educational exchange. For example, since 1963, interagency work led by the United States Trade Representative and involving State, Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture and other agencies, has assumed that all participants either had experience and institutional knowledge or were in the process of gaining it while they were working on interagency issues. There has been no continuing interagency education or training in international economic and financial analysis. Likewise, interagency work in national security affairs coordinated by the National Security Council and its staff has relied on experienced State and Defense officials, and there have been few educational opportunities other than the military war colleges and equivalent general security education institutions.

However, events preceding and culminating in the terrorist attacks against the United States nine years ago led the 9/11 Commission to issue a report calling for increased unity of effort across the executive branch of government; among the federal, state and local governments; foreign governments; and non-governmental organizations. Further, the report called on the federal government to reorganize national security institutions and refocus on current threats to international order rather than outmoded Cold War models. The terrorist attacks also were the impetus for the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—the most important reorganization of executive branch

**John Dyson is a career Foreign Service Officer currently serving as the State Department Faculty Advisor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College where he teaches courses in diplomacy and interagency processes.**

responsibilities since the National Security Act of 1947. The birth of the DHS amalgamated several diverse functions formerly part of other cabinet departments and agencies. Concurrently, Congress passed laws to facilitate the sharing of information between the intelligence and law enforcement communities in cases of national security and homeland defense.

This confluence of events has led to a new emphasis on “interagency” education,

improving interagency operations are the subject of numerous reports, studies, and conferences. For example, recent Office of the Secretary of State/ Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) reports and GAO studies stress interagency concerns.<sup>1</sup> Government think tanks including the U.S. Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute; the National War College’s Center for Complex Operations; the Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute; and the United States Institute of Peace sponsor symposia, studies, and conferences that add to the general understanding of the need for coordinated interagency actions.

One of the more important developments in interagency education has come about as a result of the December 7, 2005, National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) entitled “Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization,” which directed the Secretary of State to “coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts, involving all U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities.” It stated: “The Secretary of State shall coordinate such efforts with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations across the spectrum of conflict. Support relationships among elements of the United States Government will depend on the particular situation being addressed.” The Secretary of State has assigned a great deal of the responsibility to achieve this task to the S/CRS.

S/CRS, in cooperation with the State Department’s National Foreign Language and Training Center (also known as the Foreign Service Institute [FSI]) and the National Defense University, provides a robust training, education, and exercise program to further develop skills and knowledge needed to address identified performance gaps for the full range of potential reconstruction and stabilization efforts. Although primarily open to its Civilian Response

**Executive Order 13434  
(National Security Professional  
Development. May 17, 2007)  
stated that “it is the policy of  
the United States to promote  
the education, training,  
and experience of current  
and future professionals in  
national security positions...”**

primarily led by the Departments of Defense and State. Nevertheless, there is still no codified set of courses and/or assignments that lead to professional-level education in interagency operations. Executive Order 13434 (National Security Professional Development. May 17, 2007) stated that “it is the policy of the United States to promote the education, training, and experience of current and future professionals in national security positions ....” National Security Council professionals report that since the National Security Strategy has been promulgated, the Obama administration has moved to revitalize the continued development of this NSPD. In this regard, the National Defense University held a National Security Professionals Symposium to discuss directions for the NSPD on August 4-5, 2010.

Elsewhere in government, suggestions for

Corps, these courses are also open to other U.S. government employees.

S/CRS courses include:

- Introduction to Department of State Agency Culture
- Introduction to Working in an Embassy
- Foundations of Interagency Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations
- Whole-of-Government Planning for Reconstruction and Stabilization: Level One
- Security for Non-Traditional Operating Environments (a series of in-theatre continuity training courses and an on-line series of training courses through the Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) portal including introductions to cultures of the Departments of State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development)

Besides the S/CRS courses, FSI's Leadership and Management School offers interagency training through its Interagency Policy Seminar Series. These two-day seminars are designed for FS-1/GDS-15/0-6 and more senior officers to build leadership and networking skills regarding specific policy problems. The courses, formerly known as Transformational Diplomacy Seminars, include such policy topics as:

- Conflict Prevention
- Peace Building
- Democracy Building
- Rule of Law
- Fighting Corruption
- Countering Violent Extremism
- Cyber security
- Disease Eradication
- Global Climate Change

The seminar organizers invite subject matter expert (SME) speakers from the government, non-governmental organizations, and multilateral organizations as well as other foreign affairs practitioners. Other schools at FSI teach various Washington tradecraft, culture, and language courses.

The JKO courses listed with the S/CRS are also available through the National Defense University's Joint Forces Staff College, which conducts four one-week Joint, Interagency, and Multinational Planner Courses and an equal number of Homeland Security Planner Courses each year. These courses bring in SMEs from various interagencies, and each course introduces students to cross-agency cultural synergies by providing a planning practicum designed to give participants experience in both planning and coordinating with colleagues from the various participating agencies.

The National Defense University teaches a five-day Multi-Agency Collaboration Course four times a year and SMEs travel to sites outside the Washington DC area to teach the course. The course focuses on multi-agency collaboration in support of national and homeland security and national preparedness planning, decision-making, and implementation. It aims to improve the capacity for cooperation at local, state, and federal levels in the U.S. and also works to improve cross-institutional collaboration with non-governmental, international, and media organizations in international and coalition activities. The course has been incorporated in the NSPD-44 program and meets several of the program's "shared capabilities" requirements for National Security Professional qualification.

The Joint Special Operations University, collocated with Central Command and Special Operations Command in Tampa, FL, teaches two-day to one-week interagency courses in both the Tampa, FL, and Washington DC areas. These courses include the Joint Civil-Military Operations Campaign Planning Workshop, the Combating Terrorism Executive Interagency



Seminar, and the Special Operations Forces Interagency Collaboration Course. The Joint Special Operations University's Department of Operational Studies offers a Joint Special Operations Warfighter Certificate that focuses on collaborative planning and advanced planning applications.

The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) has developed a series of five-week study tracks tailored to interagency studies. While these programs are part of the eleven-month academic program for military and interagency officers, the College actively recruits interagency civilians for the five-week study tracks. The Homeland Security Studies Program spans the spectrum of homeland security, homeland defense, and defense support to civil authorities by examining the integration of local, state, federal, DoD, and multinational partnerships. The program also requires students to complete two Federal Emergency Management Agency online courses. The Certificate in Overseas Contingency Operations Planning offers students a foundation in expertise critical to the execution of stability operations and reconstruction and stabilization missions. The Interagency and National Security Process track introduces officers to concepts of national security policy, constitutional law, and interagency decision making in foreign and domestic policy and explains how the executive departments work to achieve unity of effort in foreign relations. Finally, the Regional Study tracks prepare students for specific regional issues and include concentrations in Asian, Latin American, African, European, or Middle Eastern studies.

The DHS provides a rigorous preparatory program for emergency managers and response providers through its National Training Program that covers planning; organizing and equipping; training; exercising; and evaluating national, state, tribal, and local programs. Because of its domestic focus, DHS interagency work bridges national executive interagency and local/state/tribal interagency activities more than foreign-

oriented U.S. government executive departments. DHS also runs the interagency law enforcement training operations for over 80 federal agencies through its Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and maintains a National Preparedness Network to disseminate first responder information to the general public.

In addition to these short courses, the national level military war colleges all include interagency studies in their curricula. The U.S. Army War College Advanced Strategic Art Program includes a study of the interagency process that teaches students how all elements of national power, are integrated to achieve strategic objectives. Students study the theory and reality of the interagency process, analyze the main agencies engaged in national security, and travel to the State Department, the National Security Council, the Joint Staff, and other governmental and private organizations.

The myriad and various interagency offerings may seem impressive; however on close examination, some are legacy courses adapted to today's whole-of-government realities and others have been developed ad hoc to provide an educational context to the functional experience personnel gain while navigating the interagency. There seems to be no overarching framework for the studies.

Initial and continuing interagency education and training should include whole-of-government thinking— which is not always considered an interagency-wide necessity. U.S. Army Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell IV succinctly observes that an employee of the Departments of Defense and State and other government professionals often is not exposed to other U.S. government cultures until he/she is in a senior position or studying at the war colleges or National Defense University. Caldwell says this exposure should begin earlier—at the eight or ten-year mark—in the employee's career. That early exposure could occur in an educational setting similar to the command and staff colleges, and, therefore, allow the employee to develop a

personal interagency network before he/she reaches the senior ranks.

A real test of the resilience of today's interagency is the development of a "unity of effort." A unified educational exchange that ties together relevant programs will provide the ongoing education and exercises essential to conducting seamless operations when facing crises or conflicts. Interagency education and training programs have not yet developed a true unity of effort, but they have taken the first step. If today's interagency educators and trainers do not continue to build toward cohesive unity, organizations will continue to suffer from various "holes-of-government" when they face future crises or conflicts. **IAJ**

## NOTES

1 "Building an Interagency Cadre of National Security Professionals: Proposals, Recent Experience, and Issues for Congress," S/CRS, July 8, 2008; and "National Security—Key Challenges and Solutions to Strengthen Interagency Collaboration," U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 10, 2010.

# An *Integrative Approach* to the Interagency Process

**by Leonard Lira**

In his book, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, James Q. Wilson cites American political scientist Harold Seidman's description of the quest for interagency coordination as the "twentieth-century equivalent of the medieval search for the philosopher's stone." Seidman believes that "if only we can find the right formula for coordination, we can reconcile the irreconcilable, harmonize competing and wholly divergent interests, overcome irrationalities in our government structures, and make hard policy choices to which no one will dissent."<sup>1</sup> The latest campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate that war is not only the province of the military but of the entire government. The interagency problems prevalent in those campaigns make Seidman's description of this quest still applicable.

However, the problems inherent in the interagency process are not confined to just the policy coordination process, which the NSC facilitates quite well. The problem is the operational implementation of that policy. For example, General Peter Pace, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, states, "The current National Security Council process works well in 'teeing up' decisions for the President...the problem comes after...the various parts of the government take their pieces and go back to work on them."<sup>2</sup> In other words, there is no operational level executive agent or process to pull together the various elements of national power—diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic. Further, even when an executive agency seems the likely and practical candidate as the lead agency, such as the State Department for stabilization and reconstruction efforts in pre or post conflict settings or the Department of Defense in conducting governance operations during low to medium conflict settings, it often lacks the capacity to effect proper execution of the policy.

Despite the enthusiasm for the National Security Council (NSC) process, the national security actors, those governmental agencies that make up the NSC construct, still lack the ability to consolidate all the various government agencies' resources into one mechanism for the implementation of policy.

**Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Lira is a U.S. Army Strategist currently teaching strategic and operational art at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He has recently published "Design: the U.S. Army's Approach to Negotiating Wicked Problems" in *Venturing Beyond the Classroom: Volume 2*.**

This is an operational problem; however, it is one of capacity and not structure. The solution for this is to harmonize the executive agencies' actions through "collaborative" measures that work through the current structure, functions, and authorities of the government agencies, rather than attempt to restructure.

## **Historical Review of Interagency Process—Common Themes**

Several historical examples from Vietnam, El Salvador, Haiti, Bosnia, and then Kosovo, and Afghanistan suggest similar interagency problems have existed for a long time. Common throughout the history of the interagency process are the obstacles—rules, structures, authorities, and politics—to interdepartmental implementation of policy in general and national security policy, specifically. For example, agencies did not have clear incentives to work together, and they lack institutional memory to learn from experiences. Failures stemmed more from poor implementation than weak policy. Success often resulted from strong individual actors and/or presidential emphasis. These obstacles can be traced from post World War II through the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The realization after WWII that the U.S. now shouldered the burden of managing global responsibilities brought about the creation of the National Security Act of 1947. One of the act's primary purposes was to bring strategic coherence, consensus, and decisiveness to the burgeoning global responsibilities that the U.S. was assuming as an emerging superpower. WWII demonstrated the huge effort required to integrate resources and budgets; coordinate diplomacy and military power; collect intelligence; and conduct combined air, land, and sea military operations while managing allied strategies.

As the U.S. continued to emerge as a superpower and increase its influence in global affairs, executive agencies realized the need to synchronize their efforts to support the nation's

strategic goals. In Vietnam, the problem of synchronization led to the civil-military program called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). CORDS evolved from disparate programs that attempted to coordinate political, economic, and intelligence activities. The U.S. Information Agency initially implemented these disparate programs, known as the Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam (PROVN), under the leadership of William J. Porter, the Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam. However, Ambassador Robert Komer lobbied and eventually persuaded the White House to separate these programs from the embassy, form CORDS, and embed it within the U.S. military command structure in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> Robert Komer attested to the interagency failings in Vietnam in his RAND monograph, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, and attributed these failings to bureaucracies returning to their familiar patterns of operating when they encountered problem sets atypical from their previous historical experience. The CORDS program is a prime example of how a strong personality at the working level could ensure that synchronization occurred. Such strength of leadership is now recognized as an important requirement for effective implementation of policy in a coordinated manner. Komer's strong-willed personality and his ability to integrate with the military, in particular General Abrams, proved pivotal to the success of CORDS.

In El Salvador, civil and military governmental agencies failed to apply lessons learned from the CORDS experience and relied on the strong personalities of the lead actors. Again, strong influential leadership backed by presidential decree rather than organizational harmony seemed more successful. Three ambassadors, Dean Hinton, Thomas Pickering, and Edwin Corr, led the embassy in El Salvador from 1982 through 1988 and "commanded" all government agencies in country in accordance with the role defined in their presidential appointment letters.<sup>4</sup>

Cold war conflicts such as Grenada and

Panama also demonstrated that successful actions have included strong individual actors and/or presidential emphasis. For example, the Army Center of Military History historian Edgar F. Raines points out, “The student of the Grenada decision-making process is left with the disquieting conclusion that the issue appears to have received its most thoughtful consideration when the president took his own counsel.”<sup>5</sup> John T. Fishel, former Professor of National Security Policy and Research Director at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, suggests that the decision to intervene in Panama, even with many adaptations to the interagency process via organizational changes, demonstrates the process still comes down to personalities and relationships. For example, Fishel writes:

Although mechanisms, often [called] ‘work arounds,’ have been developed to address issues of interagency concern, they still depend, far too much, on the personal chemistry of the principals. If it is good, as it was in the case of General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker in Iraq, it can be very, very good. If, on the other hand, it is bad, as it was in the case of Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Administrator, Ambassador L. Paul “Jerry” Bremer, also in Iraq, then it is horrid!<sup>6</sup>

A prime example from Iraq is the success or failure of the stability and reconstruction operations based on the relationships between State Department entities, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Defense entities, such as the Civilian Provisional Authority (CPA), and Multi-National Force Iraq. According to James Stephenson in *Losing the Golden Hour*, the early relationship was terse, predominately due to CPA attitudes and need for centralized control. Stephenson explains that USAID’s culture was one of independence in developing

and implementing policy, something not afforded USAID while it was under CPA’s control. Although the relationship was much better when dealing with the military, the USAID’s long-term goal for the democratization of Iraq was at odds with the military’s short-term goal of providing security. Stephenson credits Major General Peter Chairelli’s integrative approach and collaborative personality with the success that the 1st Cavalry Division and USAID had in Baghdad. When MNF-I wanted to employ the same method across Iraq, it met with lesser degrees of success. Stephenson implies this was because they replicated the method but failed to replicate the integrative and collaborative relationships.

### **Why Public Sector Organizations Act the Way They Do**

The bureaucratic environment in which government agencies operate is a paradox. Executive departmental agencies are created and funded by the legislative branch of the U.S. government, but controlled by the executive branch. Therefore, many of the interagency problems prevalent today are a by-product of the American federal form of government. The founding fathers laid the foundation for an effective government to do the people’s bidding but also placed checks and balances both horizontally among its branches and vertically between the national and state governments in order to maintain the diffusion of political power and prevent tyranny. To understand this system, one can draw on the literature from political science, management, and public administration.

At first glance, literature on the subject from political science appears to present two views on bureaucracies, neither of which relate to the interagency arena. Amy Zegart, Associate Professor of Public Policy at UCLA’s School of Public Affairs, indicates that this might be because political scientists tend to treat the study of bureaucracies at one of two extremes. At one end of the extreme, the rationalist in the international relations field treats bureaucracies

as rational actors that conform to the designs of the state in the international environment. At the other end of the extreme, new institutionalists of American politics characterize bureaucracies as “ineffective, inefficient, and incapable of serving any broad based national interest” and fashioned by special interests as “creatures of politics.”<sup>7</sup>

There are, however, some samples in the political science literature that study the circumstances of the individual actors in each bureaucracy and the context of the environment in which they operate in order to determine the variables that affect their abilities to integrate and work together. One example confirms that domestic issues affect the actions of bureaucracies. Steven Hook, professor and chair of the Political Science Department at Kent State University, writes that the nation’s lawmakers who control the purse strings have strong predilections about the State Department, which traditionally has been under resourced, which limits its ability to work effectively in the interagency environment. Hook states, “Members of Congress expressed an actual disdain for diplomats....Congress strictly limited State Department budget and closely scrutinized the diplomatic corps.” He goes on to state that Congressional creation of the National Security Act of 1947 in effect created two ministries of foreign affairs, the State Department and the NSC, which forces the Secretary of State to not only contend with foreign governments, “but also with rival power centers in the executive branch.”<sup>8</sup>

Political science professors Dan Wood and Richard W. Waterman attempt to demonstrate empirically, via a time series study of seven different public bureaucracies, that the probable primary factor influencing the actions of the bureaucracies is the power of political appointments. Strong leadership personalities may account for effective actions more than budget manipulation, legislative changes, or administrative reorganization. Specifically, they find that “modern presidents select political leadership not only for their expertise and to

reward supporters but also for their ability to administer the president’s plan.”<sup>9</sup> The implication of their study for the interagency is that personal factors, such as relationship to the appointer and the capacity to facilitate agency actions, determine how effective they are as interagency actors.

**...changes to structure may have less of an impact than changes to interpersonal relationships at all levels from strategic to tactical...**

Another sample of political science research takes the interpersonal factor a step further. Political science professor Timothy J. McKeown completely revokes the view that organizational processes and rules control institutional actions. Instead, he provides evidence that human capacity to anticipate events and act in strategic manners provide a better explanations for actors in the interagency arena. To elaborate this assertion, he cites the following from James G. March, Professor Emeritus at Stanford University: “The decision processes of [government actors] seem to be infused with strategic actions and *negotiations* at every level and every point.”<sup>10</sup> The obvious implication for the study of the problems in the interagency process is that changes to structure may have less of an impact than changes to interpersonal relationships at all levels from strategic to tactical.

Management literature further expresses the effects of strong interpersonal actions in the interagency process. Abram Shulsky and Francis Fukuyama’s review of classical literature on management identifies three structural forms—hierarchical, networked, and flat/virtual—and finds the structure of an organization is determined by the flow of information within it.<sup>11</sup> While their



research focuses primarily on the structure and effect of organization on commercial institutions, their findings have implications for the study of problems in the interagency arena. These findings support the idea that changes in structure may not fix the issues plaguing the interagency process. Interagencies do a good job of teeing up the issue, which requires gathering the required information for decision. Agreeing on the

**...leaders of organizations primarily attempt to implement change through structural changes; however, the real catalyst for change occurs in the informal structural and relationship-based settings...**

objective and providing the capacity to comply and collaborate among all interagency players is the real problem. Therefore, structural changes alone, which according to the management literature fix information flow, may not be as effective.

Other samples from the management literature point to interpersonal variables, such as leadership, that may provide a better catalyst for effective interagency process. For example, Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend indicate that the leadership paradigm under which organizations currently operate may be impeding their ability to operate as effectively as they could. Bennis and Townsend write: "The paradigm for the [leadership] structure is control, order, and predict. The other paradigm is acknowledge, create, and empower."<sup>12</sup> In their research, Bennis and Townsend find that leaders of organizations primarily attempt to implement change through structural changes; however, the real catalyst for change occurs in the informal structural and relationship-based settings. Such

settings could include working groups, cubicle mates, and water cooler meetings. In their book *Driving Results Through Social Networks: How Top Organizations Leverage Networks for Performance and Growth*, Rob Cross and Robert J. Thomas recommend organizations harness these informal networks to cultivate an interpersonal climate of collaboration that allows the organization to be more effective at accomplishing its purpose.

Based on the samples from the management literature above, the implication for the study of issues in the interagency arena may be that traditional approaches to increase agency effectiveness that start with formal structural changes may not lead to the desired result. Rather, modifications that enhance the informal or interpersonal processes may have a better chance of producing the desired effect.

The negative attributions of structural changes and the positive attributions of interpersonal skills are also present in the literature from the field of public administration. Robert Maranto and Douglas Skelley point out in *Public Administration Quarterly* 27:3 that many researchers question the effectiveness of structural reforms on government institutions and determine that the political leadership of government institutions must contend with contingencies, such as culture and organizational processes, to garner support from the career civil servants charged to implement reforms.

Rutgers University and University of North Carolina public administration professors Sanjay Pandey and Bradley Wright take the examination of structural reforms further by empirically studying the effect of such changes within the context of inherently interpersonal environments. Their study indicates that structural reforms primarily aim at optimizing the efficiency of organizations, a similar finding to that in the managerial literature. However, they point out that "public organizations address complex social functions, providing goods and services that cannot be easily packaged for exchange

in the economic markets.” Extrapolated to the interagency setting, the implication is that structural changes may further hamper actors involved in the interagency process from coordinative or collaborative activities in complex environments.<sup>13</sup>

To operate in this type of political environment, agencies require what Wilson calls autonomy and resources. To achieve autonomy requires that the agency match its mission to its jurisdiction in order to meet congressionally mandated purposes and presidential directives. Government agencies do this by acquiring appropriations; personnel; and most importantly political support from Congress, the President, and in some cases, the citizenry and from adjacent agencies working on the same issue. Wilson explains that public agencies encounter obstacles to achieving autonomy and resources when they face inadequate budgets, complex tasks, several rivals, and many constraints.<sup>14</sup>

Recommended solutions to this problem should increase budgets, simplify tasks, reduce the number of rivals, and mitigate constraints on the authority of the executing agency. However based on the literature from the field of political science, management, and public administration, structural changes such as those recommended by the Goldwater-Nichols Act for the interagency may not work. Rather, informal modifications to the capacity of each agency based on collaborative skills and interpersonal variables may have more of an effect, especially if other agencies with a stake in a particular issue contribute to that capacity.

## Recommendations for Improvement

As the historical review of interagency issues shows, systemic problems have been present throughout the history of operations requiring integrated interagency solutions. Further the theoretical research from political science, management, and public administration seems to indicate that interpersonal variables could have a greater impact on making the interagency

process effective than organization reformations. Therefore, the question remains. What can government do to resolve the issues plaguing the interagency process?

Researchers of this issue have provided several recommendations. One recommendation, offered by many authors, would make one functional command responsible for the interagency process, either by allowing the NSC to take charge of the process or by creating a new entity to do so. Another recommendation would do away with the geographic combatant commands in the U.S. military and turn them into joint interagency commands. Depending on the level of conflict within the region, either a civilian or military leader could lead a joint command and would have full command authority to accomplish any mission in the region.<sup>15</sup> Both of these recommendations appear to be based on the premise that interagencies should restructure authority or reform how authority is organized. The research above would seem to dispute that. Additionally, placing complete authority in one agency while rescinding the capabilities

**...based on the literature from the field of political science, management, and public administration, structural changes such as those recommended by the Goldwater-Nichols Act for the interagency may not work...**

and authorities of other agencies would violate what Gabriel Marcella describes as the fundamental law of the interagency — “functional interdependence (where) no national security or international affairs issue can be resolved by one agency alone.”<sup>16</sup>

By far, the most compelling recommendation

raised to date would legislate interagency cooperation by creating a Goldwater-Nichols Act for the interagency. Given the conclusion drawn from the literature above, this would not only be less effective, but also less prudent. The primary reason Goldwater-Nichols worked well for the military services—all four services shared the same principle purpose of defending the nation through military means—is also why it will not solve interagency coordination shortcomings. Institutions routinely involved in the interagency process have different missions and most certainly do not focus on the defense of the U.S.

**...“some of the very hallmarks of American democracy—separation of powers, regular elections, majority rule—inhibit good agency design and provide incentives for political actors to keep it that way...”**

by military means. Zegart’s assessment of the problem supports this point: “some of the very hallmarks of American democracy—separation of powers, regular elections, majority rule—inhibit good agency design and provide incentives for political actors to keep it that way...agencies are created by political actors who must operate in a reality suffused with conflict, contention, and compromise.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the issue is not so much the structure or the authorities allotted by the structure but the politics influencing the reasons behind the structures. This assessment harkens back to the interagency adage that nobody is in charge of the process. If viewed as an informal organization, the interagency is, in fact, leaderless by design. However, according to authors Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, this condition may not be such a bad thing, and in fact, the nebulous organization of the interagency

system may be on the cusp of harnessing the exponential power of the type of leaderless organizations that Brafman and Beckstrom write of in their book, *The Starfish and the Spider*.

Brafman and Beckstrom’s theory asserts that leaderless organizations are some of the most powerful as a result of decentralization and social networks that facilitate collaboration. They contend that decentralization is a good thing in implementing action through social networks. However, centralization to a certain extent is still necessary to ensure compliance within agreed upon norms. They explain that the federal government, as designed by the Constitution, already displays two key principles of a Starfish organization: it is split into three autonomous and independent branches, and it is inherently weak and diffuses power to the states and among the many parts of the federal government.<sup>18</sup>

Narrowing the focus from the entire federal government to just the various agencies of the executive branch, one can extend this analogy. In fact, the President or Congress created these agencies independent of each other, purposefully diffusing power among them. This design leads to the frustrations of many presidents tasked with controlling these agencies and departments within their own executive branch. If looked at as an informal organization held together by a political construct, the interagency system would resemble what Brafman and Beckstrom term a “hybrid organization.” A hybrid organization benefits from the best of both types of organizing principles, centralized and decentralized control.

Based on this idea, one could imagine the centralization of intent and purpose coming down from the President and conveyed by the National Security Council, which would act as a catalyst for implementation of that purpose, but not be the actual implementer or controller of that policy. A catalyst ignites the action and provides the reason and ideology but does not control the action. Taken a step further, if one imagines the NSC allowing one of the agencies to champion that policy based on its mission and capabilities,

one can easily apply the hybrid starfish analogy to the interagency setting.

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a valid interagency model based on the Starfish concept as developed by Brafman and Beckstrom. However, previous reform recommendations have continued to prove allusive to interagency coordination and collaboration. Additionally, the theoretical research literature seems to indicate that interpersonal and social variables may be more statistically sensitive to accomplishing interagency effectiveness. Therefore, there is compelling evidence of the need for additional research along the line of implementing some of the ideas proposed by Brafman and Beckstrom on the interagency process.

In the meantime, the above analysis suggests that changes to the interagency process need to be more integrative in nature, allowing each agency to implement collaborative measures fully with other agencies. Any modifications that focus on enhancing the personnel capability of each individual agency from the strategic to the tactical level to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to negotiate the interagency bureaucratic environment should serve this purpose.

Specifically, modifications should educate personnel of individual agencies on the nature; roles; missions; and more importantly, constraints of their adjacent agencies. In addition, the government should provide agency leaders with additional education in transformational collaboration, a process that focuses on “exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, *and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.*”<sup>19</sup> In a true hybrid Starfish fashion, the functions of each agency could be compartmentalized under shared leadership arrangements at every level. Shared leadership would allow each organization to know better when, where, and how to share capacity capabilities. The ebedded PRT model of individual members possessing honed

interpersonal skills could serve as an example.

## Conclusion

This article has examined the problems in the interagency process through a historical lens and a literature review from the political science, management, and public administration perspectives. Additionally, it analyzed recommendations to enhance the implementation efforts for national security policies among executive agencies. It suggests that the initial reactions to reforming the interagency process at each level that involve structural reforms may be misplaced. The historical review touches on scenarios where many structural changes occurred, yet problems such as rules, structures, authorities, and politics continued to plague the interagency process.

The theoretical literature review from political science, management, and public administration indicates that perhaps variables of interpersonal and collaboration skills may be more effective if combined with informal modifications to the capacity of each agency, rather than structural changes such as those recommended by a Goldwater-Nichols Act. While adjusting the authority structures may have some effect, they might only register that effect at one specific level, either the strategic, operational, or tactical. Beyond that one level, organizational structural

**...perhaps variables of interpersonal and collaboration skills may be more effective if combined with informal modifications to the capacity of each agency, rather than structural changes such as those recommended by a Goldwater-Nichols Act...**

changes may prove transitory to the other levels. However based on the constraints identified above developing the interpersonal and collaborative skills of the individuals, thus changing the interagency from the inside out rather than the outside in, may prove more useful. In other words, the solution may lie in efforts to harmonize the executive agencies' actions through collaborative and integrative measures that work through the current structure, functions, and authority of the government agencies at all levels, strategic to tactical.

The introduction of this article indicates policy is easy to decide while execution is much more difficult. Komer cautions that this may be a "grievous oversimplification," and that policy should take into account the capabilities of the institutions involved to execute that policy effectively. The various operational recommendations proposed start from a premise of solidifying authority or needing to change the structure without fully realizing the lack of capabilities inherent in each organization as established by federal system.

This article explored the application of emerging approaches, such as Brafman and Beckstrom's theory for hybrid Starfish organizations, to the interagency process. Conclusions from this limited investigation indicate that the capacity of each agency can be enhanced through education and collaborative transformation. This transformation requires agencies to enhance the capacity of each other for mutual benefit and achieve the common national purpose through compartmentalized leadership sharing arrangements. The end state requires understanding that the interagency process is a purely political process. Therefore, any study of the issues that are present in that process should begin with that premise and look for the integrative processes that would function as the interagency philosopher's stone. **IAJ**

## NOTES

- 1 James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, Basic Books, New York, 1989, p. 268.
- 2 Jim Garmone, "Agencies Must Cooperate to Win Terror War, Pace Says," Armed Forces Information Service, 15 September 2004, <[http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/n09152004\\_2004091514.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/n09152004_2004091514.htm)>, accessed on December 12, 2005.
- 3 Robert Komer, "Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on US-GVN Performance in Vietnam," Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, August 1972.
- 4 Jeffrey Woods, "Counterinsurgency, the Interagency Process, and Vietnam: The American Experience," in Kendall D. Gott and Michael G. Brooks (eds.), *The US Army and the Interagency Process: Historical Perspectives*, Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008, <<http://carl.army.mil/download/csipubs/2008Symposium.pdf>>, accessed on September 2, 2010, p. 109.
- 5 Edgar F. Raines, "The Interagency Process and the Decision to Intervene in Grenada" in Kendall D. Gott and Michael G. Brooks (eds.), *The US Army and the Interagency Process: Historical Perspectives*, Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008, <<http://carl.army.mil/download/csipubs/2008Symposium.pdf>>, accessed on September 2, 2010, p. 55.
- 6 John T. Fishel, "The Interagency Non-Process in Panama: Crisis, Intervention, and Post Conflict Re-

construction in Kendall D. Gott and Michael G. Brooks (eds.), *The US Army and the Interagency Process: Historical Perspectives*, Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008, < <http://carl.army.mil/download/csipubs/2008Symposium.pdf>>, accessed on September 2, 2010, p. 75.

7 Amy Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1999, pp. 12–14.

8 Steven Hook, “Domestic Obstacles to International Affairs: State Department under Fire at Home,” *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 2003, p. 24.

9 Dan Wood and Richard W. Waterman, “The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3, September 1991, pp. 801–829.

10 Timothy J. McKeown, “Plans and Routines, Bureaucratic Bargaining, and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 4, November 2001, pp. 1163–1190.

11 Francis Fukuyama and Abram N. Shulsky, *The Virtual Corporation and Army Organization*, Arroyo Center of the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1997.

12 Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend, *Reinventing Leadership: Strategies to Empower Organization*, William Murrow and Company, New York, 1997, p. 95.

13 Sanjay K. Pandey and Bradley Wright, “Connecting the Dots in Public Management: Political Environment, Organizational Goal Ambiguity, and the Public Manager’s Role Ambiguity,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2006, p. 513.

14 Wilson, p. 134.

15 Jeffery Buchanan, Maxie Y. Davis, and Lee T. Wight, “Death of the Combatant Command?” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 2009.

16 Gabriel Marcella, “Understanding the Interagency Process: The Challenge of Adaptation” in Gabriel Marcella (ed.) *Affairs of the State: The Interagency and National Security*, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, 2008, <[www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.efm?pubID-896](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.efm?pubID-896)>, accessed on September 13, 2010, p. 5.

17 Zegart, p. 53.

18 Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, Penguin, New York, 2006, pp. 141–143.

19 Arthur Turov Himmelman, “The Theory and Practice of Transformational Collaboration,” <<http://www.commbuild.org/documents/himicola.html>>, accessed on September 27, 2010.



## The Interagency National Security Professional Education, Administration, and Development (INSPEAD) System Act of 2010

On September 29, 2010, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ike Skelton (D-MO) and Representative Geoff Davis (R-KY) introduced bipartisan legislation that would begin to overhaul interagency national security coordination. H.R. 6249 is based on lessons learned from the Goldwater-Nichols reorganization of DoD and intended to institutionalize interagency culture across the federal government by focusing on the personnel programs used to develop national security professionals.

“For many years, we’ve heard that when it comes to interagency collaboration on national security, our system is inefficient, ineffective, and often down-right broken,” said Rep. Skelton. “This kind of disorganization is counterproductive and wasteful. But when the problem involves matters of national security, it is down-right dangerous.”

“The current interagency process is hamstrung and broken,” said Rep. Davis. “The greatest impediment to effective national security interagency operations is that many agencies lack personnel who have the skills and experience necessary to execute mission priorities as a multi-agency team in a crisis situation. Improving our interagency capabilities will significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our government when responding to national security threats and natural disasters.”

Highlights of the Skelton-Davis bill include:

- Creating a new interagency governance structure to develop interagency knowledge, skills, and experience among national security professionals.
- Creating incentives for national security professionals to undertake – and their employing agencies to encourage – interagency education, training, and assignments.
- Creating a consortium of colleges and universities to develop and offer consistent and effective interagency education and training opportunities.
- Requiring agencies to maintain staff levels to continue day-to-day functions and mission operations while national security professionals undertake professional education and training. **IAJ**

## Reading List for U.S. Army Generals

To fill the few free moments of spare time Army generals may have, General George W. Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff, United States Army, provided them with a suggested reading list for the summer of 2010. According to the *New York Times* Best Seller List, the public this summer was reading books such as “The Help” by Kathryn Stockett, “My Dad Says” by Justin Halpern, and “The Big Short” by Michael Lewis. Generals, on the other hand were being encouraged to read “A Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln” by Doris Kearns Goodwin and “The Black Swan” by Nassim Taleb. To support an informed and level interagency-intellectual playing field, the complete list is reprinted here.

### *History; Strategic Leadership; Global Perspective*

- *Sun Tzu—The Art of War* — Samuel B. Griffith
- *A Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* — Doris Kearns Goodwin
- *Supreme Command* — Eliot Cohen
- *An Army at Dawn* — Rick Atkinson
- *President Franklin D. Roosevelt: His Lieutenants & Their War* — Eric Larrabee
- *Path Between the Seas* — David McCullough
- *Dereliction of Duty* — H.R. McMaster
- *Honorable Warrior* — Lewis Sorley
- *The Great Game* — Peter Hopkirk
- *Fixing Failed States* — Clare Lockhart and Ashraf Ghani
- *War* — Sebastian Junger

### *Management and the Army Enterprise*

- *Made to Stick* — Chip Heath and Dan Heath
- *Starfish and the Spider* — Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom
- *Wisdom of Crowds* — James Surowiecki
- *The Black Swan* — Nassim Taleb
- *The age of the Unthinkable* — Joshua Cooper Ramo
- *Good to Great* — Jim Collins
- *The 5 Most Important Questions You will Ask About Your Organization* — Peter Drucker
- *Beyond Reason* — Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro
- *Innovator’s Dilemma* — Clayton Christensen
- *Blink* — Malcolm Gladwell
- *The World is Flat* — Thomas Friedman **IAJ**

# There is a Reason They Call it Foggy Bottom

by Ted Strickler

Traditionally, the United States Department of State has not enjoyed the full trust and confidence of the American people. This is due, in part, to the nature of its diplomatic work, which requires not only dealing with foreigners but at times seemingly to advocate for and defend them. Further, the State Department's Foreign Services Officers (FSOs) are often seen as elitist, Ivy League types who are out of touch with mainstream America.

A fundamental reason for this jaundiced view is the fact that State Department people don't seem to speak plain English. Part of the problem is the language of diplomacy itself, in which "yes" frequently means maybe and "maybe" often means no. Compounding the problem is the tendency by many Foreign Service Officers to use highfalutin words and phrases such as *persona non grata*, *sine qua non*, imbroglia and *casus belli*. Equally unhelpful is the fact that many diplomatic terms, such as *démarche*, *coup d'état*, *vis-à-vis*, *attaché*, *communiqué*, *rapprochement* and *laissez-faire* are derived from French. There are times when the public can barely tolerate the French in French fries let alone all the Francophone terms embedded in the daily discourse at the State Department.

Even when speaking English and not *Franglais*, the linguistically clever people at State frequently make up their own meaning for words and phrases. For example, Foreign Service Officers are roughly divided into two groups for ease of personnel administration. One group deals mainly with political and economic policy issues while the other has responsibility for the management and operational requirements of the organization. The officers dealing with the abstract concept of policy are known as substantive officers, despite being unable to touch, taste, smell or feel their elusive responsibility. Management Officers, who control the buildings, money, and other tangible resources of the organization, are called non-substantive officers. Just as Alice discovered in Wonderland, everything is not always as it seems in Foggy Bottom.

To be fair, the practice of linguistic gymnastics at State reflects the use of a specialized diplomatic lexicon that has evolved over years of use, allowing diplomats to disagree while still maintaining the façade of courtesy and cordiality. Unlike armed military campaigns which eventually cease operations, diplomacy never ends. For an FSO, even when confronted with deadlocked negotiations, the need to continue the dialog is paramount. The art of speaking in the face of disagreement or even rejection in the hope that the situation or relationship might eventually improve requires mastery of the diplomatic art of linguistic circumspection. This allows an FSO to say one thing for public consumption, but to mean something else to his or her interlocutor. To fully understand and comprehend all the nuances of what is being said by America's diplomats in Foggy Bottom, it is necessary to crack the diplomatic code.

The following chart is offered as a guide in helping to understand what diplomats are really saying when they talk to each other as reported by the media.

**What was said:****What was meant:**

Good and constructive discussions	We're still friends despite failure to agree
Engaged in discussions	Talked about whether or not we should talk
Useful discussions	It's worthwhile to talk some more
Cordial discussions	The coffee was excellent
Fruitful discussions	They liked what we said
Helpful discussions	We liked what they said
Beneficial discussions	Both sides could live with it
An exchange of views	Neither side convinced the other
Frank discussions	A shouting match
We are concerned about	We don't like what you are doing
We are disappointed about	We really don't like what you are doing
We regret	We hate what you are doing, but can't stop it
A serious situation	We won't do anything until it gets worse
A grave situation	It got worse
We have taken note of	We intend to ignore it
We cannot remain indifferent	We're thinking about what we should do
An unfriendly act	Keep it up and we'll send in the Marines

All of this verbal *repartee* and linguistic *je nais se quoi* help to strengthen the public perception that the Department's location in the Foggy Bottom district of Washington, D.C. is no mere accident of geography. To wit: The following exchange with the State Department's Press Spokesman took place on July 14, 2003:

**Spokesman:** I would expect us to continue to work with India as a matter of strategic partnership. I'm not predicting any particular problems, but I would say that we would have hoped that they would have been able to go do this...

**Reporter:** Can I ask you a technical question about language? So where does 'We would have hoped that they would have made a different decision' fit on the scale of disappointed, regret...

**Spokesman:** I think that's where those very subtle State Department reporters who understand our language will have to explain that to you.

**Reporter:** Well, okay. Is that less strong than regret or disappointment?

**Spokesman:** I'm not going to try to play games with words here.

**Reporter:** Well, you do that every day. **IAJ**







Col. Arthur D. Simons Center  
655 Biddle Blvd., PO Box 3429  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027  
ph: 913-682-7244  
[www.TheSimonsCenter.org](http://www.TheSimonsCenter.org)



CGSC Foundation, Inc.  
100 Stimson Avenue, Suite 1149  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027  
ph: 913-651-0624  
[www.cgscfoundation.org](http://www.cgscfoundation.org)